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THE
CAUSE OF TRUTH DEFENDED ;

BEING A

PLAIN STATEMENT

OF THE FACTS

CONNECTED WITH THE

Two Trials of the Rev. T. Hill,

METHODIST PREACHER,

FOR DEFAMATION OF THE CHARACTER OF

MISS BELL,

OF NORTH-SHIELDS,

CONTAINING A

CORRECT REPORT OF THE TRIAL AT YORK,

And other Matter relative thereto,

ILLUSTRATED BY

FAC-SIMILES

Of Three different Hand-Writings of Mr. Hill.



LONDON:

SIMPKIN AND MARSHALL; SEELEY AND SON;
AND HATCHARD AND CO.

—
1827.

JOHN HUTCHINSON, PRINTER,
SILVER-STREET, HULL.

PREFACE.

IT is not unknown to the public, that the case of BELL, versus HILL, which was tried at York, at the July Assizes, 1825, when the Defendant, Mr. Thomas Hill, Methodist Preacher, was found guilty of defaming the character of Miss Bell, of North-Shields, has excited considerable interest; and, although to some, who are but partially acquainted with the matter, it may perhaps seem unnecessary thus to present the case anew, yet it is hoped the following reasons for so doing, will by all be found amply sufficient.

The cause which originally induced the injured individual, who is the subject of the following pages, to appear before the public, was the vindication of her character, which had been most cruelly and grossly aspersed; and the same cause operates nearly as strongly as ever; for though a verdict of a special jury was gained at York, yet the Methodist Conference (influenced by the representation of Mr. Hill) have issued a statement in their annual printed minutes, which are most extensively circulated, wherein they wish to exonerate him from writing the anonymous letters, of which he had been found guilty; these letters, it must be observed, the Conference had not seen; and, in these minutes, in noticing the foul and slanderous charges which Mr. Hill brings against Miss Bell in those letters, to which his name is attached, they merely accuse him of an intemperate and hasty mode of expression. Thus leaving the whole Methodist body to infer that those charges are just.

Again let it be remembered, that many of the letters alluded to, were read in court at the trial at York, and consequently found their way into various publications. The charges contained in these letters, there has been no means of disproving, for though the plaintiff had twenty-one most respectable witnesses in court for that purpose, her counsel thought it unnecessary, for the information of the jury, that they should be refuted, their object being to prove Mr. Hill to be the writer of the anonymous letters.

It is with great reluctance that this case is brought into public notice, but truth, religion, and the extraordinary and painful circumstances involved therein, demand it in common justice to one of the sufferers, now removed by death, and to the feelings of another, whose delicate mind was unable to bear such calamities, as well as to the principal individual suffering in the affair, whose grief, from fruitless applications, numerous long journeys, tedious days and sleepless nights, loss of relations and property, injured health and depressed spirits, has rendered it a story of the most tragical kind. The statement will be as brief as possible up to the trial, as it has already been included in a pamphlet, and sent to the Conference. In order that the reader may have full opportunity of exercising his own judgment, Fac-Similes have been taken of the anonymous letters, and also of some other letters, written by Mr. Hill, engraved by an eminent artist, in which the striking similarity of the writing may be observed; this will be discerned by a reference to the Fac-Similes, and to the remarks accompanying them.

June, 1827.

682
1881
JAN 15
SHEPHERD

Mr. H. H. H.
New York
H. H. H.

No. 4414 from 15-1821

in your poor Minister,
generous, will it
life which a wise &
is ripening for you;
of your days with our
or add one gem to the crown
wear! ah! no — Then stop,
— However if you & your
ministers proceed in
to come forward &
our quarterly
count the cost —

we have to defend my
incompetent as you
in it,
me then in time

SHS



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John Gibson the Master or Currier
The Rev Mr. Hainsworth
Noted at Chapel

with abundant
unmixed integrity

Hills

~~Mr. Brown~~

Brother

John

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NORTH SHOT

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Mr. Johnson

Carrier

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Rev. Geo. Smith
Methodist Episcopal Church

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William
D. "W"
W. W. W.



REFERENCES TO THE

FAC-SIMILES.



Annexed are *Fac-Similes* of the two anonymous letters, proved in court, to have been written by Mr. Hill; and of a letter, and part of another, written also by him (bearing his signature) in his *usual* hand-writing, which it must be observed are not letters on this subject, but merely to shew his hand-writing before he disguised it.—Fac-Similes are also given of a *part* of the first two pages in the first and second letter which Mr. H. wrote to Mr. Sissison with his signature. Let the capitals of the one be compared with those of the others, and though those of the anonymous letters are designedly smaller, they display the same curves, and are similar in formation. It is the same in every small letter that inclines to peculiarity in construction, as, for instance, the fs, hs, and ys. The following words in the anonymous letters also closely resemble the *same words* in the letters bearing his signature—*North-Shields*, and the

dates. Compare the word "*ruin*" in the first anonymous letter—third line from the top, with the same word in the first line to Mr. Hepple*: again, the word "*Foresceeth*" in the first anonymous letter—five lines from the bottom, with the same in the quotation from Proverbs—last line in the letter to Mr. Hepple—also the word "*advised*" in the first anonymous letter—two lines from the bottom, with the same word at the tenth line from the bottom in his letter to Mr. Hepple. Observe also the word "*infamy*" which occurs in the second anonymous letter—four lines from the top, and in the first line in his letter to Mr. Hepple—also "*Dear,*" the first word in the second anonymous letter, and first word in his first letter to Mr. Sissison; the words "*you*" and "*yours*" generally throughout the letters; and the word "*Hull*" in the directions of the anonymous letters, and those to Mr. Sissison.

Another thing very remarkable is, the *minuteness* of the writing in the anonymous letters, compared with the large size of the characters in those addressed to Mr. Sissison, with Mr. Hill's signature. The letters to Blyth contain the undisguised handwriting of Mr. Hill; the anonymous letters are more diminutive; and those to Mr. Sissison appear in characters as large as those of a school-boy, on

* The letter to Mr. Hepple was written three days after the anonymous letters.

his first attempt to pass from large into round hand. But, why was this done ? To prevent suspicion and comparison, as Mr. Sissison had both the anonymous, and the acknowledged letters of Mr. Hill in his possession. At first view, the letters with his signature, are far more unlike his usual hand-writing, than even the anonymous ones are. All, however diversified in the size of their features, sufficiently indicate the author of their existence, and designate a character as various in deceit as they are in relation to each other. The very fact of Mr. Hill's writing in such a diversity of hands, proves him *capable* of writing the anonymous letters, and seeing that both they, and those with his signature, were written with the *same end*, in the *same stile*, in the *same phraseology*, at the *same general period*, to the *same person*, with the *same professions of piety and good-will*, and under the *same injunction of secrecy*, how could a British jury fail to pronounce, in the presence of that God, whose eye they were conscious rested upon them, that they were written by the *same hand*.

ERRATA.

Page 7, line 27, for "*June 11*" read "*June 12.*"

15, line 19, for "*call*" read "*case.*"

17, last line, for "*ultimately*" read "*entirely.*"

22, last line, for "*Newcastle*" read "*North-Shields.*"

25, line 15, after Mr. H. read "*except Mr. Locking.*"

32, line 15, after "*with*" read "*being.*"

43, line 3, for "*1826*" read "*1821.*"

43, 10th line from bottom, for "*W. Richardson*" read "*James Richardson.*"

43, 7th line from bottom, for "*Mr. C. Dixon*" read "*Rev. Miles E. Dixon.*"

45, line 3, for "*1812*" read "*1821.*"

45, line 27, for "*of*" read "*a.*"

48, line 14, for "*letter*" read "*letters.*"

50, (Note B.) "*The wish of Mr. Hill to keep his correspondence with Mr. Sisson secret from Mr. Story, who came into Hull Circuit a few weeks after its commencement, occasioned the note, but, from the date of the letter, it appears that it could not refer to him, as he had not then arrived.*"

52, line 36, for "*change*" read "*charge.*"

58, last line but one, for "*blind to*" read "*to blind.*"

73, line 19, for "*Skelley*" read "*Kelley.*"

79, 3rd line from the bottom, for "*I distributed the pamphlet*" read "*I lent the pamphlet to be read.*"

86, last line, for "*her*" read "*him.*"

88, last line but 7, after "*you*" read "*one iota.*"

88, last line but 6, for "*on*" read "*in.*"

PLAIN STATEMENT,

&c. &c.

MISS BELL's father, the late Mr. Jacob Bell, of North-Shields, formerly of South Shields, was a member of the Church of England, and also of the Methodist Connexion, and he successfully brought up his family, all of whom joined the Methodist Society, to attend places of worship of both denominations.

The lamented only brother of Miss B. was appointed Class Leader* and Local Preacher†. Miss B. was remarkably attached to Methodism from her childhood, and was led to associate every thing that was pious and delightful, even with the very name: she had imbibed a veneration and esteem for the preachers, who were made messengers of good to her; and through the word of God delivered by them, she was brought to experience the power of divine grace, and to taste the sweets of religion, which

* A Class Leader is a Member of the Society appointed to meet a number of the other Members, weekly, for the purpose of enquiring into their spiritual experience.

† A Local Preacher is a Member of the Society, who preaches occasionally in the neighbourhood to which he belongs, and following his secular employments, and whose services are gratuitous.

alone is calculated to afford a well grounded hope of a blissful immortality.

Under the influence of such principles, it is not a subject of wonder ~~that she should be~~ active in promoting Christianity, and more especially in the connexion of which she had formed the highest opinion, and to which she was formerly united—hence she was a visitor of the sick by appointment, a collector for the mission fund, a member of the clothing society, a gratuitous teacher in various schools, and a promoter of Methodism, to the utmost of her power; she experienced the esteem and affection of the preachers and their families, enjoyed their company, constantly ranked in their own estimation among their warmest friends, and at the time this lamentable case commenced, which has robbed her of so much happiness, she had been twelve years in the Society.

During the three years that the Rev. A. E. Farrar and his late wife were in the North and South Shields Circuits, they were on the most intimate terms with Miss B. and her family, and frequently anticipated the pleasure of a visit from her in another Circuit, which, in the year 1819, she went to Hull for the purpose of paying. While there, Mr. William Sisson, a member of the Methodist Society in that town became acquainted with her, and, on her return home, addressed to her father the following letter:

HONORED AND DEAR SIR,

It is not without a feeling of very great diffidence that I take up my pen to address you on a subject in which you must feel very deeply concerned as well as myself. I have no hesitation in saying, that I was led by a *special interposition of Divine Providence*, to form an acquaintance with your amiable and estimable daughter, (Miss Jane) of which you will e'er this have been informed: an acquaintance, for which I feel I shall have cause to be thankful, as long as I live, even if it should never have the pleasure of seeing her again.

The impression made upon my mind of her superiority, (not only to the generality, but even to the higher classes of females with whom I am acquainted, is such, as I feel myself quite inadequate to convey an idea of; when I look at the natural and acquired mental possessions, and, above all, the exalted piety of Miss Bell, I feel so sunk in my own esteem, and so very unworthy of such a person, that nothing but the most ardent affection, combined with a conviction that I was acting under the influence of heaven, could have prompted me to presume to solicit her hand; and the only plea I have to offer in justification of my conduct, is, the fixed determination I feel, in my own breast, (in humble dependence on the grace of God) to spend my life in proving the ardency of my affection for her, and the high sense I entertain of her incalculable worth, (providing it should please my Heavenly Father to bestow this greatest of earthly blessings upon me, and circumstances can be made agreeable.)

I am not quite ignorant of the difficulties that present themselves to our connexion*, and I feel acutely sensible how great a sacrifice, you, my dear Sir, will be called to make in giving up such a daughter. should you ever see it your duty to grant your consent to our union. But, sir, I trust you daily experience that divine assistance is always proportioned to the trials we are called to bear; if earnestly sought, and, in the present instance, I feel a humble hope that the trial will be lightened, by the satisfaction of knowing that your daughter is united to one who is devoting his life to her happiness; I thank God, I can appeal to him, that by his grace, this is the pure intention of my heart.

My principal view, in writing to you, sir, at present, is, to solicit your permission to visit Miss Bell, when I shall be happy to have an opportunity of conversing with you at large, on the various circumstances connected with so important a step, which cannot be fully entered upon in a letter.

* The allusion here is to the importance of Miss B.'s domestic services at Shields, her father being a widower.

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In conclusion, I have only to say, that the relationship in which you stand to the dearest object of my heart, must be my apology for addressing you in the familiar manner which I have done, and hope you will accept the assurance of the sincere regard of

Dear Sir,

Yours, most respectfully,

WILLIAM SISSISON*."

HULL, 15th October, 1819.

P. S. Be pleased to present my kindest love to my dear Jane, as also my respects to the other members of your family, all of whom I feel interested in. Mr. Farrar desired me to mention his love to yourself and family.

Addressed to Mr. Jacob Bell, Tyne-Street, North-Shields.

On receiving this letter, Mr. Bell wrote to Mr. Farrar respecting his knowledge of Mr. S.; Mr. F.'s answer being exceedingly favourable, and particularly mentioning the strong attachment Mr. S. had formed for Miss B. he replied to Mr. S. by the following letter:

NORTH-SHIELDS, October 21, 1819.

" Mr. SISSISON,

SIR,

Previous to your's of the 15th inst. I was informed by my daughter Jane of your attachment to her; I wrote to our esteemed friend, Mr. Farrar on the subject, and received a very satisfactory account of you; I have had many serious conversations

* The observations which have been made respecting Mr. S.'s having had no regard for Miss B. since he afterwards deserted her, have been the cause of not the least of her sufferings; it is on this account, only, that the above letter is given, the expressions contained in which, and many others subsequently, very naturally induced a belief in the sincerity of his professions.

with Jane concerning you, and having great confidence in her judgment and conduct, am led to think favorably of you, by her report.

As her happiness is inseparably connected with my own, I have no wish (indeed I durst not attempt) to control her, if she sees 'tis her providential path, as I am firmly persuaded she will be clear in, before she takes such a step. I decline, sir, saying what is due to my daughter, or name the loss, we, as a family, shall sustain in parting with her. I cannot but say, you have my full permission to visit her.

I hope you, as well as Jane, constantly make it a subject of prayer, that you may be led and guided by the Spirit of God into that way he would have you to go.

I am,

Dear Sir,

Your's, most respectfully,

JACOB BELL."

P. S. Jane desires her love to you and Mr. and Mrs. Farrar, and my family present their respects.

" Addressed to Mr. W. Sissison,
currier, Hull."

This correspondence gave parental sanction to a virtuous, but unfortunate attachment, which has been followed by circumstances of the most lamentable kind, on which it is unnecessary now to dwell. We therefore proceed to observe that on the 12th of July, 1820, the partnership, in which Miss B. had been engaged with her brother, in the glass and china trade, since the year 1815, was dissolved and gazetted preparatory to her union with Mr. S.—that it was intended this union should take place in the following autumn—that it was deferred, owing to the alarming illness of Miss B.'s father, who died in October, 1820—that in consequence

of the confinement and grief attending his illness, Miss B.'s health was materially impaired during the winter; and that in March, 1821, being much recovered, every arrangement was made for the marriage, and the departure of Miss B. from Shields early in July—and, finally, that in a little more than a fortnight previous to the expected arrival of Mr. S. at Shields, Miss B. found reason to suppose that something particular had happened

On enquiry, it was ascertained that Mr. S. had received two anonymous letters, containing, as he said, "such matter as filled him with astonishment,"—that "they had caused him to make enquiries *he had never dreamed of making until awakened by such extraordinary communications*;"—and that the information he had received, confirmed the hints and warnings contained in the anonymous letters.

Sufficient proof could be given that the high opinion Mr. S. had formed of Miss B. as expressed in his letter to her father, continued to increase throughout the whole of the correspondence—he had ever, he said, "considered her as the gift of God," and, at this period, in writing to her, declared that up to the time of receiving those letters he "had looked upon her as heaven's boon," that, on the receipt of them, he felt himself too much distracted and bewildered to act entirely on his own judgement, that "he had consulted his mother, his brother, and his sister, who, with Mr. Locking, his leader, and Mr. Cookman, were *all* of opinion that they were a providential interference;" hence they concluded that the correspondence with Miss B. should terminate forthwith.

Several letters now passed without obtaining the necessary information required by Miss B. and her brother, he therefore repaired to Hull to ascertain precisely the state of the case. Mr. B. chose Mr. Cookman, one of the gentlemen who had been consulted, and who had seen the slanderous productions as a person in whose presence he might have an interview with Mr. S. who, on this occasion, produced the anonymous letters, which are as follows: fac-similes of which also accompany this publication.

Sir,

Excuse haste, brevity, and obscurity. You are engaged in an affair in this place which will prove your ruin, except Providence prevent. As a friend I warn you of your danger. May God help you!—you are cruelly deceived—*instantly break off the connexion*—better spend your days in a prison than continue it. “A prudent man foreseeth the evil and hideth himself.” Ask the **METHODIST PREACHERS**—ask any respectable person in North or South-Shields for the truth of this letter, except Dr. O. O! my friend! be advised. I could end this with a name that would easily convince you; but I forbear.—*Pray make further enquiry.*

North-Shields, June 12, 1821.

Addressed to Mr. John Sisson, Shoemaker or Carrier.

Rev. Mr. Walmsley's, Methodist Preacher, Hull.

To be delivered immediately.

DEAR SIR,

Is it you for whom this dreadful pit is dug in Shields. O! Sir, for God's sake make enquiry before you take such a desperate step. What! a Methodist join himself to infamy and poverty. Ask the **METHODIST PREACHERS** whether you ought to take such a step—ask any body in North or South-Shields, except Dr. O—l—y. Fly, fly from danger! bury yourself in a prison rather than take a-a-a-a—for BETTER for WORSE.

Your sincere friend,

Do make enquiry.

North-Shields, June 12, 1821.

Directed to Mr. Sisson, Carrier,

Rev. Geo. Smith, Methodist Preacher, Hull.

To be delivered immediately.

The grief and consternation of Mr. B. on hearing the above letters read, cannot well be described : and when, under the influence of those feelings, he turned to Mr. S. and observed "you said in your letters to my sister, that the anonymous letters had caused you to make enquiries you never dreamt of making until awakened by such extraordinary communications; and that the informations you had received corroborated the statements in the anonymous letters;" his consternation was only augmented at being told by Mr. S. that the corroborating information he had received was by letters, with a signature from a pious and respectable quarter in North Shields, wither he had written *after he had received the anonymous communications*, but that the information was given under promise of secrecy.

Mr. B. then appealing to Mr. Cookman, enquired "what was your opinion of my sister during her acquaintance with your family, while on her visit at Hull?" to which he replied, "I certainly thought very highly of her." Mr. B. however, anxious to know the extent of the effect of those letters on the mind of Mr. C. added emphatically, "and what do you now think of her?" at which he acknowledged his opinion was changed by the information therein contained. Here Mr. B. almost overwhelmed by the feeling excited through what he thus heard, exclaimed in astonishment, "what could any one say of my sister, derogatory to her character?" on which Mr. S. was induced to read from a copy of one of those letters received from this alleged respectable quarter, various slanderous expressions; remarking at the same time, *that there were other parts of the letters so bad that he neither would nor could read them to him.* After Mr. B. had denied the charges, and asserted that his sister's character should be cleared from such malignant calumnies, he returned to his lodgings, but not to sleep. He reported the substance of these nefarious proceedings to his sister, and, while musing on this *mystery of iniquity*, the phraseology and sentiments contained in a letter in his own possession, came into remembrance, and led him into a labyrinth of perplexing thought. This letter had been

received by Mr. B. about six weeks before, from Mr. Hill, superintendant preacher of North-Shields Circuit, respecting some leaders at Blyth, in the same Circuit, with whom he was at variance. Here the conflict of revolving thought began. What, surely, it cannot be Mr. Hill? and yet how like his language. But, Mr. S. says, "it is from a pious and respectable quarter." Why this exactly answers to what Mr. S. doubtless conceives his character to be; yet, although there is a striking analogy in the expressions, how could Mr. H. write so slanderously of my sisters to Mr. S. and speak so respectfully of them in his letter to me? It cannot be, and yet there is a similarity in the style of both.—Such was the state of Mr. B.'s mind during the night.

Mr. B.—reflecting on the avowed attachment of Mr. S. to his sister and also on his uniformly friendly conduct towards himself, was not without hope, that, by conversing with him more particularly, he might remove from his mind those unfavorable impressions which had been made upon it. He therefore determined, that no effort should be left untried, on his part, to effect it, being convinced that the ruin of his sister's peace of mind, as well as of her health, was inevitable, unless the agitation of her feelings could be allayed; and being thoroughly acquainted with all that had been arranged for her future life, he entertained some confidence of being able to succeed. Many times, before he was removed from this world, in adverting to that period, he exclaimed—"I saw, with one glance, that it would be as it proved. They have ruined my sister Jane, and it is more than I can bear!" but, to return, he accordingly went next morning to Mr. S. and spent several hours with him—Mr. S. in the most serious and confident manner, assured Mr. B. that but for those letters he should have been married to his sister before that day—he urged that the whole of his family, with himself, were of opinion that the quarter from which he had received his information, was unimpeachable, but, even admitting that the accounts were exaggerated, there must be *dark shades* in her character, and that all *could not be right*. Mr. B. as on the preceding evening, observed, that

if Mr. S. did not know his sister, he himself did, and would have her cleared—he would, he said, defend her character with his last gasp, and sign it with his heart's blood.

Mr. S. at the request of Mr. B. read the obnoxious passages again. Mr. B. then urged him to give up the name of the writer, and, on his declining, Mr. B. said, “now, Mr. Sissison, you have declared you would make any sacrifice, nay, that you would even go to prison if that would restore happiness to my sister's mind, but that, from the manner in which her character had been represented, you could not marry her;—be so far my friend as to put me right, if I am wrong in conjecturing that the name of Mr. T. Hill, the Methodist Preacher, is at the foot of your letters, and that he is the writer of them.” To this request Mr. S. made no reply, but on Mr. B. pressing for an explicit answer whether he was right in his conjectures or not; the reply returned was, that Mr. S. begged Mr. B. not to endeavour to cause him to criminate those who had befriended him. Many other observations passed at the time, but these are sufficient to present to the reader the leading features of the story. No tangible information could as yet be obtained. Mr. Hill rested securely upon the *piety* of his character, and on the *obligation* which Mr. S. conceived he was under to a friend. This took place on the 25th of July, 1821. Mr. Cookman was of opinion that Mr. B. must know his sister's real character, and it was only just that she should know what she was accused of. It was therefore determined that Mr. S. should write to the person at Shields, from whom he had received his information, for leave to give copies of the letters, keeping the name a secret. Mr. B. stayed in Hull near a fortnight, but could get no more information, except, that on enquiry, he found his other sister and himself were also equally slandered in those letters.

As the reader has already been referred to a letter written by Mr. Hill to Mr. B. relative to the Blyth Society, it is necessary to observe that Mr. B. had opposed Mr. Hill, where he considered him wrong in the affair at Blyth. The dimension on that subject

had arisen to a great height. Mr. H. had frequently said he believed the Blyth Society had their Attorney General in Shields, and as often intimated that Mr. B. was the person—he had also said he believed Mr. B. had joined the Blyth Leaders in writing a letter to Conference, to get him (as he said) turned out of the ministry, though Mr. B. knew nothing of the writing of such a letter, until some time after. Mr. H. had been on the most friendly terms with Mr. B. and his sisters, from his arrival in the circuit in the August preceding up to this period, which was in January, when the behaviour and countenance of Mr. H. were completely set against Mr. B. until April following, when he wrote him the *friendly letter alluded to*, telling him he had nothing against him, and *particularly respected his sisters*. This letter not succeeding in expediting a change in the sentiments of Mr. B. respecting the subject of difference at Blyth, Mr. H. appears soon afterwards to have written the anonymous letters to Hull; but, to return, Miss B. having received her brother's letter from Hull, was in the utmost distress of mind; she was conscious of her own innocence, that she was at peace with every individual with whom she had had any intercourse, and she could scarcely think that any one, *however wicked*, could write such things as were now reported in her brother's communication; but when she read therein that one of the anonymous letters was exceedingly like the hand writing of Mr. Hill, that the other which Mr. S. retained in his possession, was in the same hand writing, and that certain signed letters to Mr. S. breathed the *same spirit*, she was confounded beyond measure. That grief, with which she was burdened, excited her to lay the matter before her more intimate friends in the Society, that she might obtain their opinion and advice; Mr. Beal, her Class Leader, Mr. Little, Dr. Oxley, and Mr. Bramwell, all heard the matter with surprise, and to prove *their* good opinion of Miss B.'s conduct, they agreed that a certificate of her character should be transmitted to Hull*.

* See Appendix.

In consequence of the dissension between Mr. H. and the Blyth Society, several members of that society were to meet him at Mr. Beal's house one evening, to consider whether any method could be adopted to bring that distressing affair to an issue. After they had thus met, Mr. Beal proposed an interview between Miss B. and Mr. H. which accordingly took place through his instrumentality.—Miss B. then endeavoured to state what she wanted with him, telling him that some unknown person had written letters against her character to Hull. Mr. Beal reminded Mr. H. that Miss B. was just going to be married, and it was to the person to whom she was about to be married, that these letters were sent. Mr. H. affected some surprise, and repeated, "Married! was she! I think I heard something of it about six months ago, Dr. Oxley told me." Miss B. observed, "I believe you told Dr. Oxley." "It was your wife then told me," said Mr. H. to Mr. Beal, "a Mr.—Mr.—Mr. Mr. Tyzack, I think I heard." "No matter for the name, Mr. Hill," said Miss Bell, "my friends think of writing something to refute those evil accounts of me, and my brother is now in Hull about it." "You have plenty of friends, ma'am," replied Mr. H. hastily. "I dare say I have, sir," answered Miss B. "but, I thought, as you were my minister, your name would have some weight, unless you have any thing against me." "I have nothing for you nor against you, I have nothing to do with it—I have nothing to do with match-making." This Mr. H. repeated several times. Miss B. then said, "May I say to my Hull friends, Mr. H. has nothing against me?" At this, Mr. H. started from his chair, and exclaimed, "I will not be mentioned, I have nothing to do with it, I have nothing to do with match making." Miss B. then said to him, "Will you answer me one question, Mr. Hill? were you ever applied to?" He answered, "I tell you, ma'am, I have nothing to do with it," and appeared very much agitated, walking across the room, and repeating "I have nothing to do with it, I have nothing to do with match-making; no, no, ma'am, I've got into far too many hobbles with my interfering. All the Blyth Society have been at Shields to-night, they are going to write to conference to get me turned out

of the ministry." He then took up his hat, and said it was very late, and that he had to go to Tynemouth to his lodgings, and again he repeated "I have nothing to do with it." "Well, Mr. H." replied Miss B. "I never thought evil, nor spake evil, nor wrote evil against you." To which he merely answered, "I have nothing to do with it."—This he repeated all the way as he left the room, and went down stairs, until out of the front door.

In addition to the above, let it be well noted, that on the morning after this interview, Mr. H. called the Leaders together, and expressed a wish to leave the Circuit, but various active members perceiving him anxious to avoid being *questioned* on the subject, were so determined to prevent him, that shortly afterwards Mr. H. forwarded to Miss B. by the post, the annexed note :

"Thomas Hill requests Miss B. and her friends not to be too rash in charging him as the author of her trouble, and assures her he will make *no reply* to whatever may be said on the subject."

Wednesday Evening.

It is worthy of remark, that Mrs. Hill was a native of Hull, and acquainted with Mr. S's family—that she had often conversed with Miss B. concerning them—that Dr. Oxley was likewise acquainted with them, and that these were the only persons in Shields who had known the family of Mr. S. in Hull. When Miss B. therefore found the anonymous writer exciting Mr. S. to make application to any person in North or South-Shields but Dr. Oxley, and to apply to the *Methodist Preachers*, declaring particularly that he "*could end this with a name that would easily convince him*," being also excited to suspect Mr. Hill, she could not help recollecting some circumstances which seemed to confirm those already advanced. Having called on Mrs. Hill, after the anonymous letters were written, but previous to Miss B.'s knowledge of them, Mrs. H. said, "she understood Miss B. was going to be married immediately to Mr. Sissison, that Mr. H. had told her so; and said that he did not know whether he was a shoe-maker

or a carrier, and that he had asked Mrs. H. whether his name was *John*."

To this circumstance Miss B. paid no attention at the time, but when she saw the direction on the anonymous letter "*Mr. John Sission, shoe-maker or carrier,*" it struck her mind with great force; nor could she reconcile Mr. H.'s knowledge of Mr. S.'s family with his denying the name in the interview which took place; and let it be noted also that Mr. Heppel, one of the Blyth Leaders, hearing the anonymous letters read, said that he had received a letter from Mr. Hill, dated three days after the date of the anonymous ones, containing various expressions which were also in them. In this letter, Mr. H. in mentioning the consequences which would accrue to himself, should they go forward with their design against him, uses the words "infamy and ruin;" in the anonymous, the words "infamy and ruin," are also used. "Be advised," is in the letter to Blyth:—and, "be advised," is in the anonymous also. "For Christ's sake," is in the letter to Blyth,—and, "for God's sake," is in the anonymous. "A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself," is in the letter to Blyth,—and, "a prudent man foreseeth the evil and hideth himself," is in one of the anonymous ones. The paper, on which they were written, was the same:—the maker's name, *J. Budgen*, 1820, on both:—the stamp on the corner, the same distance in both:—the folding of both the same:—and the impression of the seal, the same on both.—In addition, it must be observed, that this letter, with the anonymous ones, were shewn to various gentlemen in the surrounding towns, whose business it was to be constantly employed in writing, and scrutinizing different hands; who all gave it as their unqualified opinion, that they were in the same hand-writing. Many other particulars might be mentioned, which are calculated to swell the amount of evidence against Mr. H.—but to return to Miss B. who was all this time suffering deeply from the malevolence of her secret foe.

Miss B. being a member of the Methodist Society, and Mr. H.

whom she and her friends now strongly suspected, both as the writer of the anonymous and the secret letters, a preacher in that connexion, she desired above all things, to have the unpleasant affair settled according to the general usage of Methodism, in cases where a preacher is charged with offence, which is to convene a District Meeting for the purpose of investigating it.

The District Meeting among the Methodists, is a meeting composed of all the Travelling Preachers in as many Circuits as the Conference hath by their appointment formed into a District. These are the only meetings at which a preacher's character can be examined preparatory to Conference;—and here let it be understood, that any preacher can claim as his privilege, the investigation of such a meeting at any time, whether he wishes thereby to refute charges preferred by any individual against himself, or to prefer charges against a brother preacher; but, a member of the Society, cannot claim such a meeting when he has a charge to prefer against a preacher, except a majority of the Class Leaders where the Preacher so charged resides, do at their meeting, sign a requisition for a District Meeting, believing the case to demand enquiry.

The Leaders' Meeting, is a convention of the Class Leaders in any local Society, in some it is held weekly, as in North-Shields, and in each, at stated periods, as directed by the Superintendant Preacher of the Circuit, of which the place of that Society forms a part. These meetings are held for the purpose of managing the business of the Society, as it respects finances, admitting or expelling members, as well as for considering any incidental matter respecting the Society, or any Member of the Society.

Nothing done at a Leaders' Meeting is official, except the Superintendant Preacher of the Circuit, or his Colleague preside. In this case, Mr. H. by virtue of his office, as Superintendant, presided at the Leaders' Meetings, at Shields. In several of these meetings, the subject of Mr. H.'s suspected guilt was introduced;

but by his refusing to allow any comparisons to be there made between his acknowledged hand writing and the anonymous—by his asserting that he knew nothing against Miss B.'s religious or moral character—that he had written no ill of her in letters to Hull—that he would go before a magistrate and swear so—and, to complete the innocence of his character, having circulated far and wide, both in public and private, that he had received a letter from the anonymous writer, making an acknowledgement of his crime, and leaving himself at his mercy—to save him from an IMPLICATION of guilt, as well as on account of his awful and reiterated appeals to heaven, as witness of his innocence—a majority were influenced to suppose him not guilty.

In a matter which thus involved the character of a Preacher of the Gospel—the very Preacher appointed by a body so respectable in their estimation, as the Methodist Conference, to be the Superintendent of the Shields Circuit, and a Preacher, who had, in their hearing, repeatedly testified of “the deep things of God” and to whom they had looked, not only for instruction, but example, it must be acknowledged not to be marvellous, that the Leaders should admit the lowest degree of evidence in his favour, and that some of them should believe his solemn protestations of innocence, nor is it to be wondered at, that few of them had penetration enough to discover the futility and inconsistency of his testimony.

Some Leaders, however, there were, who saw clearly into the deception, and who, in consequence, considered it their duty to endeavour to convince their brethren, the Leaders, of the same, and, for this purpose, discussions were continued at several meetings to a very late hour of the night; but, it was evidently of no avail, Mr. H. being present at the meetings, repeating, and apparently resting securely under, his professions of innocence. It was therefore found by Miss B.'s friends in vain to hope that a majority of the Leaders would sign a requisition for a District Meeting on the subject, and thus not being able to apply in an official way to Mr. M'Nicol, the chairman of the District Meeting,

(who had previously been informed of the circumstances, by the late Dr. Taft, who was an intimate friend of Miss Bell's) they, at *different times*, waited upon him as private individuals, to impress his mind with the necessity for the convention of such a meeting, knowing that he could call one independently of any requisition, if he were so inclined. Mr. M'Nicol, on hearing the reasons there were to suspect Mr. H. and comparing the anonymous letters with his hand writing, discovered the similarity, and acknowledged the thing "*diabolical*," and that any man who would act such a part as to write letters without a name requesting a person to write to himself, and say what he pleased, under promise of secrecy, *deserved to be punished without mercy*; and that the man who could do so, would, *without doubt, deny it*." He further said, "that he would write to Mr. Cookman, of Hull, and reason with him upon it, and desire to know whether or not Mr. Hill's name was signed to the secret letters, said to have come from the pious and respectable quarter in North Shields; and that he would likewise write to Mr. H. and tell him that he *must* meet Miss B. in the presence of a few friends, and convince her of his innocence, if indeed he was really free from guilt."

Mr. Hill never waited on Miss B. in the manner prescribed by Mr. M'Nicol; he merely went within the shop and left a message, saying it was very wrong of Mr. M'Nicol to write to him, after he had told him he was innocent. Mr. M'Nicol received no answer from Mr. Cookman. Miss B.'s friends finding a District Meeting could not be obtained in any way, had therefore now no redress but an appeal to the laws; and as a last effort to wipe away the stigma unjustly thrown upon her hitherto unrepurchased character, proceedings were entered into, and the following letter, from Miss B.'s solicitor, was sent to Mr. Hill.

" Dockwray Square, Oct. 4, 1821

" Sir,

" Miss Bell having most conclusive evidence that you are the individual who has so shamefully defamed her character, and ul-

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thrustly ruined her prospects of happiness, I beg to inform you, that unless you immediately make the most ample compensation to her for the injury done her, I shall commence an action against you without further notice.

"I am, Sir, your very obedient Servant,

"JOHN TINLEY.

"The Rev. Thomas Hill, Howard-Street."

To the above Mr. Tinley received the following reply:

"Sir,

"In answer to your's, received by this post, I beg leave to say that, as I have done Miss Jane Bell no injury, I have no compensation to make.

"I am, Sir, your's, most respectfully,

"THOMAS HILL.

"North-Shields, Oct. 4, 1821."

Miss B. frequently conversed on the subject with Mr. Beal, her Leader, who was amongst the Members that were influenced to believe Mr. Hill innocent, after Mr. H. stated that a letter had come from the writer, though previously Mr. B. declared that he had suspected Mr. H. to be guilty. Mr. B. told Miss B. she was wrong advised in going to law with Mr. H. as he was now cleared by the letter from the real writer, though he confessed he had only seen an extract from it.—Mr. B. expressed a great desire for a District Meeting, and said he would be the first to sign a requisition for one. In compliance with Mr. B.'s particular request, Miss B. agreed to take a message to Mr. M'Nicol to that effect.—Mr. M'Nicol argued as he had done before, that as a majority of the Leaders believed Mr. H. innocent, on that account there could not be a District Meeting.

In August, 1822, the cause was taken into Court at the Newcastle Assizes, Miss B. having only the first written anonymous letter in her possession—the gaining of a verdict much depended on Mr. S.'s giving up the letters, with a signature *secretly* written to him, which Miss B. and her friends all inferred were from Mr. H. Mr. S.'s mind being influenced to believe the letters true which he had received, and having promised secrecy, he was not, in his opinion, at liberty to give them up *voluntarily*. Miss B. therefore was at this time non-suited.

After coming out of Court, Mr. S. went to see Mr. Bell, who was in the utmost distress of mind, on his sister's account, and informed him, in the presence of Mr. Cookman, who had also been subpoenaed on the trial, that the letters which he had received, and which had occasioned him to desert his sister, were from Mr. H. but that he durst not give his evidence voluntarily, on account of his promises of secrecy: being, however, brought into a court of justice, he meant to do what the law required of him, and had the questions been asked of him which he expected, it would have appeared who the letters were from, but questions to that effect were unhappily never put to him.

Mr. S. while at Newcastle, found that Mr. H. at the very period he was writing the slanderous communications to him, which he had then in his possession, was declaring, in Miss B.'s own neighbourhood, where she was known, that he knew nothing against her religious or moral character, and that he had written no ill of her in any letters to Hull. Then it was that Mr. S. had his eyes first opened to observe that the fruit of slander and defamation could grow upon a tree fair in its leaves and pleasant to the eyes. When Mr. S. returned from Newcastle Assizes, fully convinced of the deceptive part Mr. Hill had been acting, in reply to a friend of Miss B. he wrote the following letter:

" Mrs. S. H. Armstrong,

" Madam,

" I do feel deeply and painfully conscious, that the words "subsequent conduct," (which closed one of my answers in the unpleasant examination I was obliged to undergo in court last Friday) are liable to serious misconstruction; and I feel extremely sorry that the agitation of mind under which I laboured, prevented me from choosing terms less ambiguous and better calculated to convey my meaning. I have no hesitation in saying, that I had not then nor ever had the slightest intention of imputing any thing to the lady in question, at all derogatory to the most unsullied and respectable character.

" The idea which ought to have been conveyed, was merely a disapproval of the warmth of temper manifested on the occasion by the commencement of an action against myself. If you think this explanation (which is the naked truth) will in any measure, tend to relieve the wounded feelings of a much injured individual, you are quite at liberty to make any use of it yourself and friends may deem advisable; and to no one will it give greater satisfaction than to,

" Madam, your obedient Servant,

" WM. SISSISON.

" Hull, 12th Aug. 1822."

Mr. S. also says, " In addition to the foregoing, I would also for your own satisfaction, inform you, that ever since the unhappy premature and abrupt closing of the trial, it has been my full intention to call in the assistance and advice of a few of the most respectable and judicious persons in Hull, to lay the whole matter before them, and whatever they advise shall be done without delay. With respect to my own character, I can assure you I feel nothing in comparison of what I feel for the suffering individuals who are bearing the weight of this calamity, and whether you will give

any credit or not to the assertion, I do most solemnly aver, that I never, for a moment, from the day I first saw Miss Bell, to the present hour, conceived the most distant idea of injuring her, either as it respects her feelings, her character, circumstances, or connexions. It is true, I have most unhappily been made the channel or instrument of irretrievable injuries; but it has been involuntary, inadvertantly, and directly contrary to my wishes and design. It is not to be much wondered at, that persons, unacquainted with all the circumstances, should mistake the instrument for the author, and involve both in one common censure, &c.

“WM. SISSISON.”

Mr. S. also in a letter to Mr. Tinley, Miss B.'s solicitor, in justification of his conduct, in not giving up the letters upon the trial, “said you must allow that your counsel manifested quite as much absence of mind as myself, with respect to asking such questions as were calculated to unfold the subject. Was there no remissness in neglecting to ask “if any other person were present at the conversation to which I was examined?” This simple enquiry would have brought the whole out*. Or if I had been asked whether I had any correspondence with Mr. Hill, that would have answered the same purpose—But these and several other questions which would have served the same end, from some mysterious cause, were never put.

Mr. S. further adds, “if Mr. H. should either directly or indirectly make any demand on Miss B. for his expenses, I should be glad to be informed of that circumstance, as I am inclined to think I possess the means of checking such a demand.”

The non-suit at Newcastle, for want of evidence, to those who were unacquainted with the matter, tended to favour the innocence

* This refers to a conversation with Mr. Hill, when he went to Hull, to endeavour to obtain from Mr. Sissison, the letters which he had written to him, at which interview Mr. Cookman was present.

of Hill, and still leave the character of Miss B. somewhat in the shade. This must have been the feeling of the Methodist Conference, which was near its close at the dismissal of the case. Mr. Hill had communicated the result to the Conference in terms of exultation. His letter began with "Victory ! Victory ! Victory."

On the other hand, Dr. Oxley addressed a letter to Dr. Clarke, President of the Conference, requesting him to call a special District Meeting, stating that, though Miss B. was non-suited, her non-suit was occasioned by a point in law, and that the evidence which was wanting on the trial, and which would criminate Mr. H. would now appear, (alluding to the accounts Mr. Sissison and Mr. Cookman had given of Mr. H.'s letters.) Mr. Little also wrote a letter to Mr. M'Nicol to the same effect, of which letter Mr. M'Nicol took no notice, but Dr. Clarke returned the following reply :

" LONDON, August 15, 1822.

" SIR,

" Your letter of the 13th I have now just received. Yesterday I closed the Conference, at half past twelve, p. m.—With your request of a special District Meeting in reference to the point in question, I have no authority to comply ; and as far as I have a right to express an opinion on the case, I should think it not only indecorous, but absurd to attempt to re-judge a business that had regularly issued in a Court of Justice:

" I have too much respect for the administration of justice in the land, to take such a step ; and your own good sense will at once, on reflection, shew you its impropriety.

" If the Plaintiff be dissatisfied, she may remove her non-suit and complaint into another Court.

" I am, Sir, your's respectfully,

" ADAM CLARKE

" To Dr. Oxley, Newcastle."

Here the reader is requested to pause for a moment, and make a few serious reflections on this letter; he is told, what indeed he has no reason to doubt, that Dr. C. profoundly respects the administration of justice, and also that he had "no authority" in 1822, even as President, to call a "special District Meeting" to try the case of Mr. Hill—Where then, he may fairly ask, was the authority lodged? Not in the President, of course: this he denies—Was it in the Conference? Doubtless it was; but then the Conference was closed "yesterday at half past twelve, p. m." It therefore appears, that Dr. Oxley's letter was received by Dr. Clarke just one day too late; and as the Conference, which alone could convene a District Meeting, was dissolved, the hope of an investigation of the case, and of justice being obtained, now depended upon the fulfilment of Mr. S.'s resolution to lay the whole matter before a few respectable gentlemen in Hull. At the same time, Dr. C.'s intimation that the complaint, the merits of which he well knew had never been tried, might be removed into another Court, was never lost sight of by Miss B.'s friends. But who could have imagined that the Rev. President, who declared it, *indecorous and absurd to re-judge a business which had not been legally decided*, but only withdrawn, would afterwards be found, as we shall find him, re-hearing and re-judging it, after a final verdict had been given by a jury, and impugning that verdict, by suffering the person whom it condemns, to remain a preacher among the Methodists, merely on his own repeated, and by others disbelieved, assertions of innocence.

But, to return.—Mr. Sisson was induced, after he came from Newcastle, more particularly to examine the anonymous letter and compare it with the letters that Mr. Hill had written to him with his signature. These letters which were written in a large hand had been sealed up, and put into the care of Mr. Sisson's brother in the preceding October, and Mr. S. did not see them again until August, 1822. It must also be observed, that Mr. Sisson had none of the usual hand writing of Mr. Hill in his possession. It was during this examination that Mr. S. was strongly convinced that Mr. H. was the author of the anonymous letters.

He wrote to Mr. Hill on the subject, and told him that he suspected him to be the anonymous writer. In the mean time, Thomas Thompson, esq. Messrs. Cookman, Henwood, Garbutt, and Locking, all Members of the Methodist Connexion, being assembled to examine the letters submitted by Mr. S. wrote a letter to Mr. H. at Burslem, in Staffordshire, where he had been stationed by the recent Conference, stating to him their earnest wish to have the business settled, without further legal interference, and strongly recommended him to come to Hull and meet them and Miss B. He wrote various letters in answer, several to Mr. Kelk, the Superintendant Methodist Preacher, all manifesting the greatest alarm, and a determination to have the letters returned from Mr. S. for which he had since the trial made the strongest application. In one letter, he stated he would come; in another, following shortly, he declared his intention was not to come; finally, in answer to another letter, he wrote that he should come, but would not meet Mr. Cookman, but that Mr. Kelk should be at the meeting; and further, made various proposals, as conditions of his coming, which *he expected* would be attended to, particularly stating that no human being was to have a copy of his letters. Agreeably to the request of the other gentlemen, Miss B. addressed the following note to Mr. K. on the day on which Mr. Hill was expected—

“ HULL, November 13, 1822. .

“ REV. SIR,

“ As I understand that a meeting is about to be held, to take into consideration the unhappy business in which I have been so great a sufferer, I beg to state to you, Sir, that having nothing to desire but truth and justice, I am entirely willing to be guided by the judgment of yourself and the other preachers, associated with the following gentlemen :—

“ Thomas Thompson, esq.

“ Mr. Garbutt,

“ Mr. Locking,

“ Mr. Henwood.

“ I am, Sir,

“ Your's, most respectfully,

“ JANE BELL.”

This note was written with a view to be countersigned by Mr. Hill. The disappointment, and mortification, which he felt on finding *only copies* on the table, were strongly depicted in his features, and he pleaded a necessity for quick dispatch. He saw it was in vain to expect a return of his letters, and no doubt dreaded a complete exposure of the whole truth—he refused to meet Miss B. either with, or without her friends, and refused also to meet Dr. Oxley and Mr. Little, who had come purposely from Shields to Hull to attend the meeting—he obstinately refused every plan for a final decision of the case; and, after spending a whole day and part of a second, the gentlemen, who engaged in the examination, read all Mr. H.'s letters, and went into the evidence, which ought to have appeared on the trial, and being each of them fully convinced that the anonymous letters were in the hand-writing of Mr. H. they were obliged to dismiss the case, with assurances to Miss B. that nothing written against her was proved, and that her character stood pure and unimpeached, but that they were unable to settle the business, having no power to act according to the Methodist laws. Mr. H. had, however, promised to call a District Meeting, (it was in his power as a preacher so to do) which promise, no doubt, was made to get the meeting broken up; as he returned to Burslem, and they heard no more from him.

Each of these gentlemen, with the exception of Mr. Kelk, recommended Miss B. to endeavour to obtain a District Meeting, if Mr. H. did not fulfil his promise. Mr. Kelk observed that he durst not say any thing respecting the business, as the Conference would censure him were he to sit in judgment on any brother*.

It was now in vain, however, even to attempt the convening of a District Meeting, as the reader will remember that according to

* The original letters written by Mr. Hill to Mr. Sissison, (upwards of twenty in number) were put into the hands of Mr. Kelk at this time, on condition that they were to be produced if the Conference could be influenced to investigate the business; if not, they were to be restored back to Mr. Sissison, when required by him.

the system of Methodism, the consent of a majority of the Class Leaders, where the Preacher, charged with offence, resides, is requisite to obtain such a meeting, and Mr. H. being now removed to a distant Circuit, it was more than probable that his protestations of innocence would have an influence on the mind of the Leaders' there similar to that which they produced on the minds of those in Shields—hence the idea was relinquished, and several extracts from his letters to Mr. S. being obtained, the Pamphlet already alluded to, entitled "A Plain Statement of Facts," was published, a copy of which, together with a note, was forwarded to Mr. Moore, President of the Conference, in 1823, requesting an investigation of the matter by that body. In return, Miss B. received the following communication :

" LONDON, Sept. 11, 1823.

" MRS BELL,

" MADAM,

" I received your pamphlet in the Conference at Sheffield, accompanied with the note which you mention. Not knowing any particulars of the painful circumstances, except by report, I was much at a loss to know what was expected of me ; but, as I soon learned that the statement was *published* in Sheffield, I thought it was probable that some person was, or would be, employed to bring the matter before the Conference, for you must be sensible that it would be quite improper for *me*, in my official situation, to bring on any accusation. In this expectation, however, I was mistaken. This is my answer to your note as far as I am personally concerned.

" With respect to the Conference, I do not conceive that they have any thing to do with the business. Mr. Hill has been acquitted in a public Court of Justice, and no other tribunal can, without great injustice, now call upon him to answer charges which have been so solemnly, and with such high authority, investigated and determined.

"With sincere wishes for your happiness, and hoping that you will surmount all the trials of this bad world, through Him who endured all afflictions for you,

"I remain, your's, respectfully and affectionately,

"H. MOORE."

Mr. Moore, the President, in 1823, is not a whit behind the Dr. in professions of concern and good-will. He could not bring the business forward, either because, 1. "the Conference has nothing to do with it," 2. Mr. Hill was acquitted in a public court of justice," and 3. "No other tribunal can, without *great injustice*, now call upon him to answer charges which have been *so solemnly* and with *such high authority investigated and determined*." Such were the substantial reasons of the President in 1823. Now, be it known to all concerned, that, for want of the same evidence at Newcastle, which was produced at York, the matter was *not investigated at all*; it was *only dismissed*. This requires no proof, but merely to direct the attention of the reader to the trial at York, in which Mr. H. was found guilty of defamation. Had it been investigated, and determined at Newcastle, it could not again have been brought up at York, and had the decision at York been received by the Methodist Conference, with the same enthusiastic attachment to British Law, and the decision founded on it; that appears in the two letters now given, Mr. Hill's case never would have been regarded by them as it has been, nor would he have been retained in the Connexion after such a decision of the law.

When the pamphlet was circulated, various individuals in different parts, who read it, felt a desire to know more particulars of so uncommon and cruel a case.—Amongst the number of such, were a few humane persons residing in Beverley, who wrote to some respectable inhabitants at Shields on the subject, and also conversed with those persons whose names were mentioned in the pamphlet, that had investigated the matter at Hull. Those persons

being satisfied that Miss B. and her family were greatly injured, and deserving the assistance of those who had it in their power; they then formed a correspondence with Miss B.'s brother, the late Mr. Bell, and offered to unite their influence to induce the Methodist Conference to do justice—they, themselves, being members of the Methodist Society. During the course of that year, Miss B. was deprived by death of this her only brother, on whom she had become entirely dependant since the loss of the trial; as from the numerous expenses connected with it she had lost her all. Those friends kindly continued their correspondence with Miss B. after the death of her brother, which had plunged her into the greatest distress, and it was obvious to all around her, that if any thing could turn her mind from the late distressing scene, it must be persevering to obtain redress for all the misery that had been so unjustly brought upon her; and from the contents of the President's letter, they had strong reason to suppose that had she attended at the Conference in 1823, her case would have then been heard: the advice of her friends, therefore was for her to attend personally at the ensuing Conference, which was to be held at Leeds, and while considering the propriety of so attending, some friends at Hull made a vigorous attempt to induce the Preachers to examine the case preparatory to the Conference, (on the ground of equity, if they could not by their laws) as the principal of the evidence lay there. This attempt proved abortive; accordingly Miss B. in 1824, went to Leeds, and sent in the following letter to the President:

“ SIR,

“ After consulting a number of my friends, I have at last come to the determination to appeal to the Conference once more, in hopes that the Preachers will at length attend to the charges I have to prefer against one of their own body—had I known that the President of the last Conference (Mr. Henry Moore) would have required a personal attendance, I certainly would have made provision accordingly, but supposing that had the Conference been inclined to hear the case, I should have received timely intimation to produce witnesses, I contented myself with writing—

but, as the President's letter informed me that he expected some person would have attended at the last Conference—I was, I apprehend, justified in concluding that he intended I should understand that if such witnesses had attended, they would have been heard, and that as I have now come prepared to state that Mr. Sissison, of Hull, is ready to obey your summons, to give evidence in the case.—You will not deprive me of the benefit of my character, which a fair hearing of the case must produce. The charges I have to prefer against Mr. Thomas Hill, are these:—1. That he has written two anonymous letters to Mr. Sissison, of Hull, with intention to defame my character, and prevent Mr. Sissison from fulfilling his engagement to me.—2. With the same base and wicked intention, and, in furtherance of the same design, he has written several letters to the same person, which letters are signed by his own hand, and are in possession of Mr. Kelk, in trust, that if it should become necessary they may be produced, and, besides, that Mr. Hill has acknowledged, in the presence of Thomas Thompson, esq. Messrs. Henwood, Locking, Garbutt, and others, that he was the author of those vile charges against me, contained in the attested copies produced before those gentlemen. I shall, therefore, thank you for instruction, as to when you require my attendance, and that you will request Mr. Sissison to give his attendance also—that justice may be done me in this cruel case.

“ I remain, Sir,

“ Your's, &c.

“ JANE BELL.”

“ To the President of the Wesleyan Methodist
Conference, Leeds, July 28, 1824.”

Miss B. waited on the President, the Rev. Robert Newton, Messrs. Bunting, Watson, and others of the leading Preachers, who treated her with every mark of respect, but informed her that as Mr. Hill had not been brought to a District Meeting, (which was the regular way to try a Preacher previous to the case being represented to Conference) they were of opinion it would not be

regarded, and especially as it had been taken into Court. Miss B. informed them of the endeavours of her friends for many months to obtain a District Meeting, but that Mr. H.'s assurances of innocence, and of his having received a letter from the author of the anonymous letters, influenced in his favour a *majority* of the Leaders. Miss B. further stated, that when the case was taken into Court, there was *only one* of the anonymous letters in her possession, but now, as it was well known there were many letters with Mr. H.'s signature; she considered her claim to an investigation equally just as before it was taken into Court. Mr. Newton, the President, assured her that he would state to the Conference that he had received her letter, as he considered it an uncommon case, although it was not usual to pay attention to letters. During the fortnight Miss B. remained in Leeds, the President informed her that the affair was a subject of much conversation amongst the Preachers assembled, and that the character they all gave of her who had been stationed in the town where she resided, and had known her many years, was very different indeed from the account Mr. Hill had given: they stated that a whisper against her character had never been heard; he further said that the Conference were in a dilemma what to do on the business. On the *last day of the Conference Meeting*, the President informed them that he had the letter in question. Several Preachers stood up and observed it was a business which had been in a Court of Justice. The President said, "Miss Bell states she has evidence which *has not* been in a Court of Justice." The reply was "*if Miss Bell has additional evidence, a Court of Justice is the proper place to take her additional evidence to.*"

In all probability it was then and there judged that it might not be in the power of Miss B. to be able to bring it into Court, from the property which had already been spent, and the depression of mind she had experienced. Thus the effort failed in relation to the *third* Conference, after the iniquitous letters were written.

It will be seen from the following communications to the Editor of the Hull Advertiser, dated 12th August, 1825, that

strenuous but unsuccessful efforts were also made by Mr. S. himself to prevent its going into Court again, and have it settled in and by the Methodist Connexion.

The reader will not deem the communication tedious, as it contains Mr. S.'s reasons for delivering up the letters written by Mr. Hill, with his signature,—letters which are to appear in the sequel.

To the Editor of the Hull Advertiser.

SIR,

As I learn that an attempt is making, by certain individuals, to persuade the public, that I have acted dishonourably to Mr. T. Hill, the Methodist Preacher, against whom a verdict was given at the last York Assizes, for defaming the character of Miss Jane Bell; and, as I understand, they appeal to three letters of mine, which appeared in your paper of the 22nd ult. I shall feel much obliged by your inserting the two following letters, which, I hope, will be found to contain satisfactory reasons for the course I have pursued. The first of them was written about twelve months ago, and formed the last of a series of efforts to bring Mr. Hill to some acknowledgement and reparation of his error:—

“ Mr. HILL,

“ SIR,

“ I have most maturely considered over the correspondence which passed between you and me, respecting Miss Jane Bell; and, considering that you have, throughout the whole affair, assumed a different character from your real one, and, as you entered into an agreement, the conditions of which you have broken, I conceive myself liberated thereby from the performance of the counterpart, and, therefore, I must plainly tell you, that unless you can shew that in this I am mistaken, I do not see how I can refuse to assist Miss Bell to regain her character you have wickedly stolen from

her, by holding your letters at the call of justice; for, it appears that at the very time you were writing to me, to dissuade me from any further acquaintance with her, and giving her the worst of characters, you were professing openly in North-Shields, that you knew nothing against Miss Bell, and that you had written nothing against her. But if, on the other hand, you can shew that you did not act in this deceptive manner, that you did not make the declarations in question, and under the circumstances named above, you may depend on my repeated assurances, that I will not give your letters up.

“ Your immediate reply will oblige,

“ Sir, your's, &c.

August 5, 1824.

“ W. S.”

Previous to the writing of this letter, Mr. Hill had repeatedly been charged with the author of the anonymous letters, which he uniformly and solemnly denied. Nay, he had even asserted, that he had discovered and knew who the author was, but could never be prevailed upon to make him known to the public. His answer to the foregoing letter was not received until a considerable time had elapsed, and it was of the same complexion as his preceding ones, viz. a denial of all knowledge of the anonymous writer, and a refusal to make any acknowledgement whatever.

At this period, I still refused to give up his letters, under an impression that it would be soon enough when I was subpoenaed to do so. And it was not until the month of October, 1824, (when I was clearly convinced that the plaintiff must for ever remain without any redress, unless furnished by me with the only means of enabling her to appeal once more to a jury of her country) that I came to a determination to surrender the long-concealed letters to her attorney. Within a few hours of my coming to this determination, I conceived the idea of writing the following letter to the President of the Methodist Conference, which was immediately put into execution, as a last and final attempt to prevent another appeal to a Court of Judicature.

To the President of the Methodist Conference.

"REV. SIR,

"If the important interests of religion were not intimately connected with the painful subject on which I now address you, it would perhaps ill become an obscure person like myself, to intrude on your valuable time, merely to serve any private purpose. But, as you are invested with a discretionary power, which may in the present instance, be exerted to save from greater obloquy the character of that sect of which you, Sir, are, *pro tempore*, the head, amongst whom I was born, and of which I am now an humble member, it would argue a want of candour and due respect to the interests of Methodism, if I did not acquaint you with the change which has taken place in my views, with respect to the line of conduct I have hitherto pursued, in reference to Thomas Hill, a preacher in our Connexion, and thereby afford an opportunity of averting that disgrace which must ensue on adopting the only remaining alternative.

"You, perhaps, know, that all attempts have been steadily resisted (and they have not been few or feeble) which have been made to induce me to give up the letters that he wrote to me, respecting a certain female to whom I was engaged to be married. This unvaried resistance, on my part, has not arisen from any conviction of Mr. Hill's innocence, either as it respects the charge of writing the anonymous letters, or the falsehood and duplicity of which he was guilty in writing the letters confessedly his own; but from having bound myself, by repeated promises of secrecy. And those promises, let me observe, would still have retained their binding influence on me, if Mr. Hill had not, by his own conduct, released me from their obligations.—It is altogether unnecessary (as it regards yourself, sir) for me to enter into any reasonings on the subject. You are too well aware of the relation in which the promiser and the promisee stand to each other, to require any thing in the shape of argument to convince you of the propriety or morality of the measure.

"But you will, perhaps, allow me state, on what grounds my

own mind has been led to adopt the determination, of which you will shortly be informed. It is held, by our most celebrated writers on morals, that a promise is neither more nor less than a contract, in which both parties have engagements to fulfil, the non-performance of which, in one party, is a sufficient release from the obligations of the contract to the other party. For instance: A. engages to communicate to B. information respecting C. on condition that B. shall not divulge to C. the information in question. But the primary idea of the contract supposes that A. engages to communicate truth, as much as if the idea were expressed in so many words. If, therefore, A. violate this implied condition, he is guilty of a breach of contract, and consequently B. is fully released from his part of the engagement. Again, I promise to deliver to a second person a valuable horse, on condition that he shall pay me a hundred pounds. The promisee (apparently) brings the money; but, on examination, it turns out to be counterfeit coin. Now he would, with quite as much reason, demand the delivery of the horse, as Mr. Hill can demand the performance of my promise. He furnished me with information, which, according to his own declaration, before twelve or more witnesses, he knew to be false; for, at the very period when he wrote the scandalous letters to me, he declared, in the Leaders' Meeting, at North-Shields, that he believed Miss Bell to be a person of good character, and that he had written no ill of her. Now, sir, I conceive it to be my duty to inform you that those reasonings, and these facts, (together with some, which for brevity's sake, have not been named) have conducted me to the cool and dispassionate, though painful resolution, of giving up his letters to Miss Bell's legal advisers. If it be objected, that I might, before now, have been convinced of his guilt, and, consequently, was bound, according to my own views, to have come forward long ago: I answer, that the conviction of Mr. Hill's guilt never before flashed on my mind, with such force, as after the attempted trial at Newcastle. And, even then I was unwilling to become his accuser, so long as any possible means of bringing him to a sense of his wrong remained untried. Indeed, there is something so repulsive in the very idea of going directly in the face of a recorded and reiterated engagement, that I have re-

frained, till every effort that could be devised (without the aid of the documents I hold) had been fully tried, and tried in vain. I say, as no means whatever, short of my appearing as his accuser, and producing the long-concealed evidence of his guilt, will serve to bring him to a sense of the wrong he has done, and induce his brethren in the ministry to institute an enquiry into his moral character, does not concealment, under such circumstances, with me become a crime; I fear it does.—And, I therefore beseech you, sir, as you revere the cause of christianity, in general—as you feel interested in the cause of Methodism, in particular—let some mode be devised of settling this business, without again putting to the blush every pious person in the kingdom, for the conduct of one who has disgraced his high and holy calling. O, let not the enemies of religion take occasion to blaspheme the name of the Most High, and say, “Aha, so would we have it;” for, I do assure you, the letters and disclosures to be made, are such as will disgrace both himself and Methodism in no small degree. And this view of the subject, permit me to say, is not a phantom of the imagination, but is confirmed by the opinion of one of the most respectable and intelligent lawyers in this part of the country, to whom I must candidly acknowledge, copies of Mr. Hill’s letters have already been submitted; and the expression of his judgement was most decisive. Indeed, no person who has had an opportunity of examining them, can have any doubt of their libellous nature. Besides, after all that, Mr. Hill has affirmed to the contrary, the mass of documentary and circumstantial evidence, which must inevitably fix the anonymous letters on him, is such as renders all possibility of escape hopeless.

“It is exceedingly painful to me to have to bring forward such shocking proof of the depravity and falsehood of a person, holding the highest office with which a mortal can be invested, viz. as a messenger of reconciliation from an offended Deity to a guilty world. But how must it enhance the poignancy of shame and sorrow, not merely in my mind, but in every breast where there is a spark of feeling for the honour of true religion, when the whole country shall ring with the hateful and degrading subject from one

end to the other? You know full well, Sir, the depravity of the public taste, and you know, likewise, how eagerly such subjects are caught at by a large portion of the press, to be descanted upon with the glee of epicures, and the malignity of fiends. Then who can say the amount of evil which arises from such baneful matters. It is absolutely incalculable. O then, once more, sir, let me conjure you, by every thing that is sacred in religion—by the affectionate respect which you bear to the memory of our venerable Founder—let not his name be associated in the mouth of the wicked, with this humiliating and degrading transaction.

“ In conclusion, allow me to offer a word in vindication of myself. No doubt some persons will think it a very natural supposition, that this application is made at the request, or under the influence, of the female so deeply interested in it. To all such insinuations, if such should arise, I have only to reply, that they are utterly without foundation. And I do most unequivocally, and without any reservation, declare, that this is solely and entirely my own act and deed, and not at the suggestion of any other persons. It is, I repeat it, solely from a wish to prevent the odious publicity, and mischief, and infamy, which must ensue from bringing the matter again before the judicature of the country—(which will most certainly be the case, unless some immediate steps are taken to induce Mr. Hill to acknowledge and atone for his guilt)—that this application is obtruded on your notice.

“ To every thinking mind, it appears something worse than idle talk of his character being cleared by a non-suit. Even if he had been acquitted by a jury of his country (which he was not), how would that have proved him fit to sustain the high office of a Minister? There are scores of persons acquitted in our Courts, whom the Methodists Society would not disgrace itself by admitting as private members:—much less, then, is it excusable to screen a preacher, by so pitiful a subterfuge, especially as the charge against

him is not so much a question of law, as morality. Anxiously waiting your reply,

"I am, reverend Sir, your's, respectfully,

"W. Sisson."

Addressed—"Rev. R. Newton, President of the Conference, Methodist Chapel, Salford."

"You will, perhaps be surprised, Mr. Editor, to learn, that no notice whatever was taken of this appeal. The consequence was, that measures were immediately adopted to obtain the decision of a British Jury, whose verdict has proved, that Mr. Hill was the real writer of those anonymous letters.

"Now, Sir, I think I may confidently appeal to you, and to every candid unbiassed reader, whether I was not fully released from any obligations to Mr. Hill; and whether the blame of the publicity which has been given to this odious affair, rests with me, or in some other quarter.

"Even before the attempted trial at Newcastle, I laboured to the utmost of my power to prevent its going into Court, but without success; and I cannot but regret, that when Miss Bell's friends first applied to Mr. M'Nicol, the preacher, who was the chairman of the Newcastle District, to call a District Meeting, to try Mr. Hill, he should have refused, and thus have obliged her either quietly to sit down with the injury, or appeal to a Court of Law.—And, even after the non-suit, (for the case was never *tried* at Newcastle,) the Conference might have saved the plaintiff the pain and expense of coming again into court, by arraigning Mr. Hill for the injury he had done her.—The publicity, therefore, of this affair, and the injury which may thereby be done to the cause of Methodism, will not, I trust, be charged on me, but on those whose duty it was to have prevented it.

"I am, Sir, with great respect, your's, &c.

"W. Sisson."

Hull, August 4, 1825.

We have now seen that the Methodist Connexion declined the investigation so ardently and perseveringly sought by Miss B. ever since the year 1821, under cover of their laws as a community.— Were any except the Preachers permitted to be present at the sitting of Conference, the friends of Miss B. might have entered and pleaded their own cause, when undoubtedly the tale of woe would have affected the hearts of a majority, and led to the exercise of a discretionary power, in favour of Miss B. ; for had they, as a body, been equally influenced by a voluntary love of justice, truth, and propriety, as by a zeal for attention to strict discipline, they, without doubt, would have taken it up, with all the honour and integrity of these of impartial feelings. Mr. Wesley, there can be no doubt, would have done so. His love for *true religion* would have induced him calmly to have heard all that could be advanced against one of his preachers by Miss B. her distinguished friends at North and South Shields, and those who were lovers of truth at Hull, and the result, without law proceedings, would have been expulsion.

After Mr. H. received notice of trial, he made a demand upon Miss B. for his expenses incurred by the former trial.—The Court enquired why he did not demand his expences at the time of the non-suit three years ago, to which his affidavit replied, that it was on account of the state of Miss B.'s circumstances that he had not demanded the money.—Mr. Sissison made out an affidavit, stating that he believed that the *real cause* of Mr. H. not applying sooner was, that Mr. H. knew it was Mr. S.'s intention to give up the letters, if he made any demand upon Miss B*.

Without further remark, the reader is now presented with a copy of the proceedings upon the trial at York.

* It may be right to observe here, that Miss B. had not only spent her all in the law-suit but that her brother had likewise been put to much expense, and that several hundreds of pounds were lost by the sale of their stock in trade, which they were obliged to dispose off, being rendered quite incapable of attending to the business, from ill health, and grief of mind. Mr. H.'s demand, amounting to £155. 10s. was of course complied with, out of the small property which Miss B. obtained at her brothers death ; but it is generally believed, that he had already been more than remunerated by a subscription set on foot in the Methodist Connexion, as much as £70. having been sent from Bolton, in Lancashire, alone.

THE TRIAL.



Counsellors for the Plaintiff.

Messrs. Scarlett,
Brougham,
Coltman.
Mr. Shepherd, Solicitor.

Counsellors for the Defendant.

Messrs. Pollock,
Alderson,
Tindal.
Mr. Bramwell, Solicitor.



Mr. Brougham opened the Pleadings.

IN this case Jane Bell, was plaintiff, and Thomas Hill defendant. The declaration stated, that at the time of publishing certain libels, which were set out in it, the plaintiff was single and unmarried, and that one William Sissison was also single and unmarried—that there was a Society of Methodists, of which the plaintiff and her sister Margaret were Members, her brother, John Bell, a local preacher, and the defendant, Thomas Hill, a minister—that the defendant published in that Society, and elsewhere, certain libels, with which he would not trouble them at present—and that in consequence of the publication of those libels, one William Sissison, a man of credit, and respectability, who had intended to marry the plaintiff, had refused, and still did refuse to marry her. There were other libels put forth, without any counts, for the frustration of the marriage. The defendant pleaded that he was not guilty; and, upon that plea, issue was joined.

Mr. Scarlett, for the Plaintiff.

IN this case, Jane Bell is a young woman, residing at North Shields, in Northumberland. She was in partnership with her brother, John Bell, who carried on a respectable trade as a china-warehouseman.—They were members of a class of Methodists, who were very numerous in that part of the country; and he un-

derstood that many members of it would speak to the regularity of the plaintiff's conduct, to the high estimation in which she was held among her friends, and to her universal good character. The defendant, Thomas Hill, was a minister among these Methodists. He understood that this class of persons, though under the same form of government, as the rest of his Majesty's subjects, were under a religious form of government peculiar to themselves. The country was parcelled out into different circuits. In each of these circuits certain local preachers were appointed, and over these a minister presided, who received his emolument from the contributions of his flock, which were more or less extensive, according to the influence which he possessed over the Societies. Mr. Hill was placed in the situation of minister over the Circuit of North Shields, exercising an authority over all the Local Preachers in it, with no other restraint upon his conduct, than what was dictated by a sense of his own interest. The complaint of the plaintiff was, that the defendant, from a malicious and unworthy feeling towards her, had interfered in the extraordinary way which they had just heard, to prevent a union between her and a respectable man in her own rank of life, residing at Hull, to whom she was shortly going to be married. She alledged that, in consequence of some resentment which he felt towards her brother, one of the local preachers, who had taken a part against the defendant on several occasions, and was friendly with a party inimical to his worldly interests, it had become an object with the defendant to destroy the influence of her family at North Shields, and to compel her and her brother to quit the home in which they had been educated. With this motive in his heart, he set several secret springs to work—he frustrated this marriage, and did all he could to injure this young woman in the opinion of her friends and companions. The present was therefore a grave and serious charge, to which he invited the careful consideration of the jury; and if he satisfied them that the motive which he ascribed to the defendant actually influenced him, a more base, a more scandalous, nay, he would even say a more wicked case, had never come into a court of justice, or one which demanded a larger

compensation at the hands of a jury,—a case which was rendered the more dark and atrocious, because the defendant had endeavoured to promote his own worldly interests under the cloak of religion, at the expense of a worthy and virtuous young woman. In the course of the year 1819, an intercourse commenced between Miss Bell, the plaintiff, and Mr. W. Sissison, the individual to whom she was to have been married. Being pleased with the young lady, he became acquainted with her family, and attached to herself. He offered marriage to her, and was accepted. The marriage was to take place in June or July; but the day on which it was to be solemnized was not fixed. Mr. Sissison, he ought to tell them, was a carrier, with sufficient means of subsistence to make his life comfortable, and wife happy. They were satisfied with each other: she was amiable and attractive; they were equal in rank, and therefore, in contracting marriage together, there was every prospect that their union would form and perpetuate their happiness. Mr. Sissison, shortly before the day, on which his wedding was to be celebrated, received an anonymous letter directed to him, and addressed to the care of one of the preachers at Hull. The next day he received another letter addressed to the care of another preacher at Hull. The object of both these letters was to calumniate the young woman he had selected, and to represent her as unfit for an honourable and virtuous wife; and they professed to come from an intimate friend, who, from his deep regard to him warned him against the danger of forming a connexion either with her or with her family. Such letters would have had little influence upon persons of strong minds. They would have shown them immediately to the lady calumniated, or to some of her family, who would immediately have refuted such scandalous insinuations. Mr. Sissison, however became alarmed. He dreaded the existence of some mystery, and seemed to think that slighted warnings might turn into deadly curses. He expressed himself in such terms to a friend in York, to whom he wrote for advice on the subject of the letters.—He ought to inform them, that, at this time, Mr. Sissison had no acquaintance with Mr. Hill, and that Mr. Hill had artfully contrived in the anony-

nous letters, of which he (Mr. Sissison) charged him to be the author, to hint that inquiry ought to be made of the preachers—that was of himself—as to the character and connexions of Miss Bell. Mr. Sissison had been acquainted with Mrs. Hill, the defendant's wife, from his childhood. But so little was he known to Mr. Hill, that at the first he never thought of applying to him as leader of the circuit for the information he wanted. It was only when he saw in the letter a direction to inquire of the preachers, that he addressed a letter to Mrs. Hill, whom he had formerly known, in order to obtain some information on the matters which had been communicated to him. Out of that letter, he believed, would arise the defence of the present action—namely, that the letters which the defendant had written regarding this young woman, were privileged communications, made at the solicitation and request of Mr. Sissison. He would show them the two anonymous letters which he had mentioned, as well as certain other letters which were undoubtedly written by the defendant. They should then compare those letters together, and should decide whether they did not, when combined with other evidence, he should place before them, convict the defendant of malice, and take away from him every part of the defence which he expected to hear him that day set up. He would confess, that he could not look at these letters without strong feelings of disgust and shame. They were hypocritical, treacherous, calumnious, vindictive, and blasphemous into the bargain. For his own part, he had, from the effects of early education, always felt the highest respect for religion. It not only bound man to man, but it also bound man to God, the great Creator and Preserver of us all. Therefore it was, that nothing excited greater disgust in his mind, than to see a man clothing his wicked purposes in the garb of religion—to see him converting the mild ministry of the gospel, into a medium for propagating slander and calumny—to see him breaking every commandment in the Decalogue in the fear of the Lord, and violating all the precepts of our kind and benevolent Creator; under his sanction, and by his authority. It was terrible to contemplate such a state of things; and he sincerely hoped that it was not, nay he was convinced that it could not be, the principle of any religious

sect, that the ruin of private character, and the gratification of revenge was sanctioned or justified by the word of God. And yet when he read the letters of this reverend preacher, he was afraid that it was a tenet of his faith—a doctrine of his religion—a religion which he supposed consisted in mere kneeling, just as if his morality consisted in mere prayers. The first anonymous letter was couched in these words:—

NORTH SHIELDS, June 12, 1821.

SIR,—Excuse *haste, brevity, and obscurity*. You are engaged in an affair (A) in this place which will prove your ruin, except providence prevent. As a friend, I warn you of your danger. May God help you? You are cruelly deceived. Instantly break off the connexion; better spend your days in a prison than continue it. “A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself.”

(A) It was one refuge, to which Mr. Hill resorted, when he was suspected of being the writer. There was no specific charge in the letter, and no name mentioned, he said the affair might allude to some matter of business.

* The reader will remember that one object of the present publication is the answering those letters of Mr. Hill to Mr. Sisson, the particulars of which were not all refuted and explained in Court, as would have been the case, had all the following witnesses been called, twelve of whom could swear to Mr. Hill's hand-writing, and who were not all called for the reason assigned in the Preface. Much of their contents require no comment; the mis-statements and falsehoods contained in them will alone be regarded.

John Rippon, esq. own uncle to Miss Bell, an opulent gentleman, residing on his own estate, near S. Shields.
Nicholas Bird, esq. N. Shields.
Mr. W. Richardson, merchant, N. Shields.
Mr. E. Robson, boat builder, S. Shields.
Dr. Oxley, late of N. Shields.
Mr. C. Dixon, M. Preacher, Norwich.
Mr. Little, draper, N. Shields.
Mr. J. Pollock, printer, N. Shields.
Mr. J. Potter, shoe-maker, N. Shields.
Mr. J. Carr, school-master, Blyth.
Mr. D. Lyon, timber merchant, Bolton.
Mr. M. Cook, builder, N. Shields.

Mr. T. Smart, grocer, N. Shields.
M. L. Heppel, block-maker, Blyth.
Mr. Watson, surgeon, N. Shields, would have attended, had he not met with a severe accident by which he was confined, but a certificate was sent by a medical gentleman.
Mr. G. Cookman, currier, Hull.
Mr. R. Gasbutt, merchant, Hull.
Mr. W. Sissidon, currier, Hull.
Mrs. Peacock, N. Shields.
Mrs. Armstrong, N. Shields.
Mrs. Robb, S. Shields.
Mrs. Talbot, N. Shields.

"That", said Mr. Scarlett, "is a quotation from Scripture, of which you will see that the defendant is very fond, before you have done with his compositions. The letter proceeds—'Ask the Methodist preachers.' I have mentioned to you before the object with which this sentence is written, and I now tell you that this sentence takes away from the defendant the defence which I said that I expected the defendant would this day make." The learned counsel here stated the law as to privileged communications, and contended that the words, "Ask the Methodist preachers," coming from him, rendered his subsequent communications to Mr. Sission, not a voluntary, but an officious, interfering communication, for which he was liable in damages, unless he could justify it as true. He then read the remainder of the letter, which is subjoined:

Ask the *Methodist Preachers*(A)—ask any respectable person in North or South Shields, for the truth of this letter, except Dr. O——(B), O, my friend, be advised, I could not fill with a name that would easily convince you; but I forbear. Pray make further inquiry.

Addressed "To John Sission, shoe-maker or currier, to the care of the Rev. Mr. Walmsley, Methodist Preacher(C). To be delivered immediately."

(A) The reader cannot be too strongly impressed with the manner in which he urges Mr. S. to ask the METHODIST PREACHERS by underlining the words thrice.

(B) It must be observed, that Mr. Hill knew that Dr. Oxley was the *only* individual with whom Mr. S. was acquainted in North or South Shields, and that he was the particular friend of Miss B.'s family.

(C) The letters being directed to the care of two of the *Methodist Preachers* stationed in Hall, a hundred miles distant from where they were written, proves the writer to have been a person acquainted with Methodism, as these preachers are removed every two years.

The learned counsel, pointing out the room which was left to the imagination in filling up the blanks in this letter, said he would next read the second anonymous letter to them. It ran as follows:—

NORTH-SHIELDS, June 12, 1821.

DEAR SIR,—(A) Is it you for whom this dreadful pit is dug in Shields? O Sir, for God's sake, make enquiry before you take such a desperate step—What! a Methodist join himself to infamy (B) and poverty! (C) Ask the Methodist Preachers whether you ought to take such a step? Ask any body in North or South Shields, except Dr. O—l—y, (meaning a Dr. Oxley, a medical gentleman who had long been intimately acquainted with the plaintiff's family. The letter then goes on): Fly! Fly from danger: bury yourself in prison, rather than take a —, a —, a —, and a — (D) for better, for worse

Your sincere friend.

Do make enquiry.

Addressed "To Mr. Sissison, currier, Hull. To the care of the Rev. George Smith, Methodist Preacher."

(A) It will be evident to the reader, by the fac-similes, that both the anonymous letters are in the same hand-writing. It is to be remarked, that though they bear the same date, this was not received until the post after the other. There can be no doubt but this was designed to make a greater impression on the mind of Mr. S. than if they had both reached him in one day.

(B) The word *infamy*, used in reference to a female, might certainly have the worst construction put upon it. It may, however, be remarked that Mr. H. was in the habit of using this word and it will be noticed that in the letter to Mr. Heppel, of Blyth, of part of which a fac-simile is given, the word is there used in a different sense.

(C) Had this been the case with Miss B. it is certainly quite a novel species of crime, but how utterly false the insinuation is, is proved by the certificates in the appendix.

(D) It ought to be noted, that when this letter was mentioned to Mr. H. he asserted that it contained no charges against Miss B. and that the blanks might have been intended by the writer to be filled up with the words amiable, virtuous, or any thing good. The good sense of the reader will convince him that no person but one interested in making this assertion, would have hazarded so foolish an opinion.

He would now tell them what Sisson did on receiving these two anonymous letters. He sent one of them to North Shields. The matter got wind there, and created much conversation. The defendant, Hill, got to hear of it, and then, in reply to a letter which he had received from Sisson, wrote the following answer:—

NORTH SHIELDS, June 21, 1821.

DEAR SIR,—The (A) surprise which your anonymous scribbler must have produced in your mind, will be sufficient to give you an idea of the feeling which your letter has produced in mine. My good wife was from home when your's arrived (B). I am glad she was, for she *could not have answered you*; and she would have been very reluctant for me to do it. *I shall not mention your letter to her, nor any body else; it must be kept a profound secret* (C). But what am I to say to you? You will say, "Tell me the truth, and all the truth," Ah, my friend, but can you bear it? If I tell you the truth, will you not be grieved, and consider me your enemy?

The learned counsel begged the jury to reflect on the artful manner in which this letter was written. He did not remember any instance, except one, where all the circumstances which could excite alarm, suspicion, and jealousy, were so carefully collected together. The single instance which he excepted was that in which IAGO tortured OTHELLO whilst labouring under a fit of jealousy which he had himself excited. They would all of them

(A) His professed surprise was, no doubt, to prevent Mr. S. suspecting him as the writer of the anonymous letters.

(B) It is true, Mrs. H. was from home, but Mr. H. was with her: they, with the family, were at Tynemouth, one mile from North Shields, her usual place of residence.

(C) This injunction requires no comment.

recollect the ingenious manner in which Iago irritated those feelings in the gallant Moor, till they brought about the murder which forms the catastrophe of that admirable tragedy. The letter went on—

Have not you gone so far, that it is now too late to ask advice? Are you not determined, at all events, to make her your's? If you say, "No,"—would not a few tears and a few smiles change your mind? Besides, Sir, you ought to judge for yourself. But you say, you have not had an opportunity of making proper inquiries. I am sorry for that; you should have done it long ago. Now, Sir, what am I to do? Methinks your father, whom I highly respected and your relations at Barrow, from whom I have received every kindness, beg of me to tell you the truth; and you are anxious that I should develop this mysterious affair as much as possible. Well, Sir, then, as I am a minister of Jesus Christ, and as I must stand at his bar to account for all my transactions—

Mark, gentlemen, said Mr. Scarlett, the impiety and audacity of his assertions, as he is going to make his foul and false insinuations.

I will tell you my opinion. I think I could easily find out your anonymous friend. I am confident (if I conjecture right) he (or she) was actuated by pure motives (A). I cannot go so far

(A) It cannot but be remarked how different this statement is from the opinion expressed by Mr. H. when these letters were first mentioned to him at Shields, he then said the anonymous letters were written by some radical rascal, but that he had no idea who the writer could be, and that he had no doubt but that his handwriting was imitated. He declared that that sacred place (the vestry) was not a proper place for such vile letters to be mentioned in, though he declared he had not seen them; but Dr. Oxley and Mr. Bramwell had repeated their contents to him. The fact is that at that time he had seen them. Mr. S. on receiving them, sent copies of them both, in the letter to Mrs. H. which letter was answered by Mr. H.

as your friend(A)—I dare not—but I do sincerely believe you could not make a worse choice(B.) I have heard many of our respectable friends say. "God help the man that is going to have her," or words to that purport; but I never knew who the man was, before last week(C). If you can possibly extricate yourself, I think you should without delay(D); but if you cannot—why marry, and endeavour to make the best of it. She may be better than those who know her expect; but it is very uncertain. My dear young friend(E), I feel for you; and, if I had you at my elbow, I should ask you TWENTY questions, to each of which I should require an answer.

(A) Let the reader determine whether this anonymous writer, (who, in the end, has turned out to be Mr. Hill himself,) or Mr. Hill, in his avowed letters, with his signature, which was to be kept a secret, went farthest.

(B) This vile slander was certainly as inapplicable to the character of Miss B. as ever any thing that was written of any human being, of which the reader will by and bye be convinced by the testimonies of many who had known her through life.

(C) True, *he did not know sooner*, and he was quick in making use of his knowledge. The anonymous letters were written the week before; this letter was dated June 21, and the anonymous letters were written on the 12th of the same month. It was at that very period, the day before, or the day but one before the anonymous letters were written, that Mr. H. came into the house in great haste to Mrs H. and told her that Miss B. was going to be married immediately to Mr. Sission, and enquired of Mrs H, whether Mr. S. was a *shoe-maker*, or a *currier*, and if his name was not *John*, and it has already been observed that the first anonymous letter was directed Mr. *John Sission, shoe-maker or currier*.

(D) It will by and bye be seen that Mr. H. has entirely forgotten that he laid this injunction upon Mr. S.

(E) It should be observed that this *endearing* expression was applied to a person whom *he had never seen*.

The Jury might decide from that specimen, whether the Rev. gentleman was not a proficient in the trade of slander. The letter proceeded—

I should *feel your pulse*, and examine your countenance, with all the craniological acumen I could master. Can you any way get rid of this person—and be honest? Can you live without her? Remember, I don't think you can live with her(A).

(A) The falsehood of this cruel and wicked expression is proved by all the numerous certificates that will appear. The subjoined extract of a letter* from one who had known Miss B. intimately in domestic life for fourteen years, and also a certificate† from a respectable character who had resided in the house eleven months are certainly in point. Miss B.'s father also in his letter to Mr. S. says, "I decline saying what is due to my daughter, and naming the loss, we, as a family, shall sustain in parting with her."

* I am sorry any person should have been *permitted* to pain the feelings, wound and rend the heart, so *truly unworthy* of such malignant treatment? I feel no hesitation in saying, Miss B.'s *conduct, in every respect*, is highly worthy the *imitation* of those around her, and nothing but satanic influence could give birth to such vile aspersions and base insinuations. If we trace Miss B. through domestic life as a daughter, she has been most *dutiful and tender*; as a sister, most *affectionate and disinterested*; as a neighbour and a friend, respected by *all* who are capable of appreciating her worth: as a woman of business, highly respected by *many* of the *first families* in Shields. Respecting her christian experience, and *conduct in the church*, none has had more opportunity of knowing than Mrs. Oxley and myself, which we have ever found to accord with the truths of the *Gospel*, nor have we had any cause to lessen the high esteem we have for these many years contracted for her. Miss B. possesses a *mind* far above many of her *sex*, and capable of filling a much *higher* situation in life than many of her equals with *credit* to herself and honour to her *connexions*. The man, whom heaven may bless with her for a wife, will have a most *kind, affectionate, and indulgent partner*, and, in every respect, a *very sympathizing helpmate*. I feel imperiously called upon, from sense of duty, to advocate the *cause* of injured innocence, &c. &c.

W. OXLEY, M. D.

† I do hereby certify that I resided in the house with Mr. Bell and his sisters, from September, 1819, to August, 1820, during which time I observed that Miss Jane Bell's conduct was particularly discreet, and, in every respect, becoming the character of a respectable and virtuous woman.

SAMUEL JONES, M. D.

She, her sister, and her brother, are generally considered as a dangerous and disreputable family;—buried in debt—always squabbling and deceiving, full of religion, *even sanctification!*—and full of drunkenness, scandal, and columny^(A).

The letter went on—"Perhaps I have said enough." "Can any man," said Mr. Scarlet, "doubt it? but what comes next"—

"Perhaps I have said enough; and, as you are a religious man, and have solicited this information, I hope you will sacredly keep your promise, and never divulge the source from which you have received it, so as to bring *me and mine into trouble*. Write a few lines by return of post, and say how you like *this*, and what more information you want.

Don't let the Preachers know^(B).

(A) Perhaps there never was a list of immoralities attached more undeservedly to three persons, as will appear by the certificates of their numerous friends and the merchants with whom they dealt, all of which prove they were respectable in family, character and circumstances, and, it can be confidently asserted, that, in no one instance, with the exception below, were any of them ever accused of being guilty of one of these vile charges. With respect to *drunkenness*, it is a fact which all who are intimate with them can prove, that Miss B. and her sister always drank water—nor was the term *drunkenness* at all applicable to Mr. B. It is admitted that he had occasionally been led into excess in the course of his business, which particularly exposed him to temptation, but this was by no means habitual, on the contrary, it is only just to his memory to state, that for many months together, and, sometimes for years, he never drank any thing but water.

(B) His reason for this, no doubt, was that Mr. Story, one of the Preachers, then stationed in Hull, was an old friend of Miss. B. and her family; he had known them for fourteen years, and, while travelling in the Newcastle and Sunderland Circuits, was in the habit of visiting and remaining at their house.

I am, yours, respectfully,

THOMAS HILL.

What I have written, I have written, cut the name off (A)."

Addressed—"To Mr. William Sissison,
currier, Hull."

It was remarkable, continued Mr. Scarlett, that he requested his name to be cut off this letter, as if he had been afraid of detection. I must now tell you, that notwithstanding what he had written in this letter, he was declaring, at the different meetings held regarding the anonymous letters, that the writer of them was a radical villain and a great scoundrel, utterly forgetting how truly he was depicting himself by that character: and yet, notwithstanding that, he shortly afterwards wrote another letter to Mr. Sissison, repeating all his former insinuations against Miss Bell. That letter is as follows:

This letter had no date, but it appears was put into the post on the 21st of July, 1821.

DEAR SIR,—I cannot find out your anonymous friend. The person I alluded to knows nothing of it. I should think it impossible for C. W. esq. to recommend it (B). He is not at home,

(A) This request was accordingly attended to, and the signature of Thomas Hill was cut off.

(B) How far he was mistaken, in thinking that it would be impossible for C.W. (meaning Mr. Christopher Wawn) to recommend Miss B. to Mr. S. will be seen by that individual's opinion on the case, and also by the subjoined extract of a letter* written by him. No individual could express greater indignation against the persons who had injured Miss B. than Mr. W. He told her brother that if he left a stone unturned to find out who it was that had injured his sister, he was not worthy of her, and was most severe against Mr. S. for having deserted her.

* I am surprised to hear that accounts have been received highly prejudicial to the character of Miss Jane Bell, of North Shields. As a Christian and Methodist Class Leader, I feel it an act of justice to say I have known her from a child; she met in my class five years, and her conduct and conversation adorned the Gospel, both in religious and domestic life, &c.

CHRISTOPHER WAWN.

or I would soon ascertain that point. *Mr. Beal* is one of the best and most candid men I ever met with. I know what *he* would say if he said any thing;—but it is a delicate task. I have heard him and more than twenty others, say—“*God help the man who has her*(A).” After all, I think the worst that can be said of *her* is, that she is poor, and the most consummate whining hypocrite that can be found(B). The following I had from a

(A) *Mr. Beal* declared to *Miss B.* in the most solemn manner, that he never said any such thing. Indeed it was improbable that *Mr. B.* should say so. He was *Miss B.*’s Class Leader, had always shewn her every mark of respect, and treated her with the greatest kindness. On no one occasion had there been the smallest reason for reproof on his part, on the contrary, he had, on various occasions, mentioned *Miss B.*’s conduct in terms of the greatest approbation in so disinterestedly, serving the interest of her brother and sister.

(B) It will be remembered that in his last letter he said *she*, her sister, and brother, are generally considered a dangerous and disreputable family, buried in debt, full of drunkenness, &c. Now he reduces his charges to the two of poverty and hypocrisy. *Miss B.* could not be considered poor. Her father had made her an equal partner with her brother, in a most respectable business as wholesale and retail glass and china merchants. They had the first shop in their line of business in the town. Their capital was entirely their own, and the very honourable manner in which they paid their accounts, is proved by the certificates* of all the merchants with whom they dealt. The sums of money which have been expended in two law suits, in paying *Mr. Hill*’s costs of the non-suit, which as has already been stated, were £155. 10s. The large sum lost in the sale of their stock, and breaking up of their establishment, and the continual expences they have been subjected to by numerous long journies, during four years, together with their maintenance, and other great expences occasioned by ill health; all prove the falsehood of the charge he brings against them of being poor.

There is perhaps no charge more wounding to the feelings of a sincere mind than to be termed a hypocrite, and especially when no instance of hypocrisy is produced.* It is, however, a fact, that in no one instance, during her life, was *Miss B.* ever before charged with being a hypocrite.

* See Appendix.

most respectable gentleman the other day, who I know told the truth verbatim.—“*Dr. W.* will you lend me fifty pounds?—I am going to be married to a local preacher and a currier in Hull. Do lend me it;—I know you can. My poor dear father said I should never want if I trusted in God and old *Dr. W.* (A)” The old man is between eighty and ninety, but *he* knew better than to lend it. *John*, (meaning the plaintiff’s brother) is off the plan, for repeated acts of drunkenness, &c(B). Our preachers seem

(A) The misrepresentation given to a conversation between *Dr. W.* and Miss B. (meaning Mr. Watson, surgeon) a particular friend of Miss B. is evident from the subjoined certificate of that gentleman*.

(B) By the plan, is meant a printed circular, containing the names and appointments of the Local Preachers (which office Mr. B. held) for a specified period, according to the appointment of the Superintendant Preacher of the Circuit. He wishes it to be understood that he was not allowed to preach. The following is the fact of the case:—Mr. B. between fourteen and fifteen months previous to that period, and before Mr. H. came to Shields, his business being that of a ship surveyor, had been unfortunately led into excess, and, being conscious of his fault, went to Mr. Pilter, (the Preacher who proceeded Mr. H.) and told him the truth, at the same time consulted him whether it would not be better for him to be taken off the plan for a while as a Preacher. Mr. Pilter highly applauded him for his conduct in coming to him, and it was agreed that he should not preach for twelve months, but, in the mean time, continue a member of the Society, and resume his office, as Preacher, at the expiration of that

* It appears, some conversation said to have passed between Miss B. and myself has been represented, to place her in an unfavourable light; I hereby certify, that I have been intimately acquainted with Miss B. for a number of years, and have always respected her as a friend and neighbour; and further do certify that nothing but what is highly honourable to Miss B. ever passed in any conversation with me. In the one alluded to, if it be as it is said *vis.* that my apprentice boy, (between eleven and twelve years of age) represented it, *he* had made a mistake, which is not improbable, as any thing he might hear was by hearkening at the door.

PATRICK WATSON.

WILLIAM LITTLE, Witness, *North Shields.*
NORTH-SHIELDS, January 11 1823.

determined never to have him again. *Margaret* (meaning Miss Bell's sister) is out of the society (A), she and *Miss* take one seat between

time. In the interim, Mr. Hill came into the circuit, and became acquainted with Mr. B. and his sisters, and, in various ways expressed his high opinion of them. He frequently wished the time was come when Mr. B. was to preach, as he believed he would be "*acceptable and useful*." Previous to the arrival of the time prescribed, the misunderstanding already alluded to, took place between Mr. H. and the Blyth Society.—Mr. Bell disapproving of Mr. H.'s conduct, incurred his displeasure, which he evinced in various ways. At the quarterly meeting for March, 1821, the twelve months had elapsed, and Mr. B.'s conduct had continued throughout the whole period, highly creditable to himself and the Society. It is here necessary to observe, that there was no other blemish in the character of Mr. B.—he was well known to be a truly honourable and upright man. His admission to his former official capacity was proposed at the quarterly meeting, but Mr. H. being, by right of Conference, president, and, being highly offended at Mr. B.'s having taken (as he termed it) "*a decided part against him on the subject of difference at Blyth,*" in which, according to Mr. H.'s account, his own continuing in the ministry was involved; he very strongly opposed Mr. B.'s re-appointment as a Local Preacher, and, after a warm debate, carried his point, so that in June, 1821, Mr. B. was only a private Member of Society.

(A) Miss B.'s sister, at this time, held her quarterly ticket for March, which constituted her a Member of the Society, but, from the delicate state of her health, she could not regularly attend the Class Meetings. The tickets for June had been given, and she had not attended, but, it must be observed, the reason was, that when Miss B. applied to Mr. H. for her sister's ticket, in her presence, after the usual time of delivery, Mr. H. behaved in a harsh manner to her, and told her she was *hipped*, &c. This treatment, together with her nervous depression, prevented her meeting afterwards, so that had Mr. H. said Miss B.'s sister is an invalid, and I her christian shepherd, have left her disconsolate mind to work its own relief, *he would have been nearer the truth.*

them(A); all our respectable friends avoid all connexion with them(B), and would be happy to be finally quit of them. A gentleman of great respect asked me the other day, if John was on the plan, &c.? I said—No. He replied, "*That is a most dangerous family.*" Dr. Oxley and they are hand and glove. But, O, if you knew the *Doctor's character in this place!*(C). You have placed me in a strange predica-

(A) They occupied two sittings in a front pew in the gallery of North Shields Chapel, and also continued to keep part of a pew for South Shields Chapel, which they once had entirely occupied, until the illness of Miss B.'s father. During his illness, Miss B. could seldom attend the preachings, and, being on the point of leaving Shields, when the seats were taken, only one was kept. Miss B.'s brother also occupied a sitting below, having occasion frequently to leave before the service was ended, to go into the country to preach. They also owned a valuable pew in South Shields Church, which they recently sold, as the family all now resided in North Shields.

(B) Dr. Oxley's, Mr. Little's, Mr. Bramwell's, Mr. Beal's, Mr. Wingrave's, Mr. Potter's, and Mr. Nevison's families, were, according to the general acceptation of the word, *respectable*, certainly the families that might be termed most so in the Methodist Society at North Shields. The two former families were the most intimate friends of Miss B. and with the latter she was on the most friendly terms, and they always treated her with every mark of respect.

(C) The moral character of Dr. Oxley was unimpeached, he was one of the best friends the Methodist Society ever had in that part of the country, and his zeal for its prosperity was followed with success. When Mr. H. came into the Shields Circuit, he urged Dr. Oxley and Mr. Little to resume their official situations, and to attend the Leaders' Meetings, &c. He said he wanted them, as they were the most respectable Members to support him, and added epithets (which are well remembered) the most degrading to Mr. Beal and Robert Lawes, whom now he styles the *principal people*. It appears singular that Mr. H. should have found out so many imperfections in the Doctor's character, during his very short intercourse with him, when the best understanding had subsisted with so many of the principal Preachers who had been intimately acquainted with him for above twenty years.

ment. I know not what to say (A); but what I do say is done in the fear of God. I scorn injuring any one, and, above all, a fatherless young woman(B); but I dare not deceive you: I believe you ought to break off this unhappy connexion by degrees, if possible; and if your character is in the least impeached, or called in question by the preachers, I would boldly come forward and declare, and prove, you had, in my judgment, acted properly(C). Oh, may God, even your father's God, help you in this important point. Pray much, very much;

(A) Where could the difficulty of his situation be, or why need he be at a loss what to say, if he had not involved himself in that difficulty, by telling untruths, and now experiences the impossibility of extricating himself.

(B) Mr. H. might suppose that Mr. S. at that time, did not know that such a scurrilous pamphlet, as that entitled "A Conversation between a Methodist and a Kilamite" had been printed. Were its contents intended to injure or not? The language contained in it answers the question—saying nothing of the exact resemblance between its contents and the letters to Mr. S.—The question is—Who took the manuscript to Mr.—of—to print?—Who corrected the press?—Who gave the printer a written undertaking to conceal his name?—Who paid for the printing, and took it away?—and who, when spoken to by a respectable gentleman on the subject, denied all knowledge of it?—A perfect knowledge of all the facts alluded to is in possession.

(C) Let the reader compare this advice and offer with the declaration which Mr. H. makes in his pamphlet, and let him reconcile the two, if he can. Here, and in his former letters, he advises Mr. S. to break of the connexion, and offers to come forward and prove that he has acted properly, and in that publication we have the following passage*; "*It was now ascertained that Sissison had, contrary to the opinion which I gave him in my letters, and contrary to every thing which I conceive to be honourable and just, broken off his engagements with Miss Bell.*" So much for inconsistency.

* See page 7.

and take time, and use much patience. I shall have no objection for you to read this to Mr. Highfield, by saying "blank" where it is underlined with red^(A), and asking his advice. If, after all you are determined to marry, then burn this and the other papers, and let eternal silence seal your lips, and do all you can to forget it. She is not a fool: neither do I think her unvirtuous.

The writer here began to be afraid that Mr. Sissison might marry her, and therefore thought that it would only be prudent not to make any insinuations against her chastity. He therefore said that he did not think she was unvirtuous, thus giving her a curious kind of negative qualification. The letter went on—

Study your own feelings and your own peace; keep me for ever out of sight; and think no worse of me for telling you that which you have earnestly and affectionately solicited.—I think you should be very cautious in asking Mr. F——'s opinion: (meaning Mr. Farrar, Methodist Preacher) he does not know, or ——(B); but you must judge for yourself; I think if you are not too far gone, you will try to measure your steps back; but, but, the more easy and quiet you do it, the better. If you write

(A) Let it be observed, that, through the whole of this letter, every name was underlined with red ink, viz. C. W. esq.—Mr. Beal—Dr. W.—Old Man—he—John—Margaret—Miss—Doctors—Preachers—His object was, no doubt, to prevent Mr. Highfield, (one of the Hull Preachers) from obtaining any clue to find out the truth, so that, whilst pretending he had "no objection" to the letter being read to him, he had the greatest objection to his being able to investigate it.

(B) The reason of his guarding Mr. S. against writing to Mr. Farrar was, that Miss B. had long been acquainted with him, and he knew that he could say nothing but what was good of her, as will shortly appear, and effectually to prevent Mr. S. from being guided by any account he might receive from Mr. F. He adds one of his *all persuasive blanks*, as in one of the anonymous letters, and leaves Mr. S.'s imagination to complete the sentence in any way which his confused and bewildered feelings might suggest.

me again, let it be on Wednesday next. Our principal people, are *Boul*, Norfolk-street; *Laws*, Union-street; and *Owen*, Union-street(A); but they would not commit themselves in writing.

Yours, affectionately,

THOMAS HILL.

Addressed "To Mr. W. Sission;
currier, Hull."

The learned counsel said, that he must now inform them that, by this time, Miss Bell having heard of these letters, and having heard that Mr. Sission had made up his mind in consequence not to marry her, employed her friends to make every enquiry into her character; and, in consequence, after an appeal to those who knew her best, to the Local Preachers, and her different friends, a statement was publicly made as to the respectability of her conduct. He mentioned that circumstance to render the following letter intelligible:

This letter had no date, but it appears that it had been put into the post on the 30th of July, 1821.

DEAR SIR,—Though your *first* letter surprised me, the *last* did not. I knew they would do what they could to fix the blame upon me and *mine*(B). The person I alluded to knows nothing

(A) He might also have referred Mr. S. to any other of the Leaders—viz. Potter, Cook, Smart, Nevison, Wingrave, Matthews, and several others, who knew Miss B. as well as the three whom he named, and whom he very *improperly styled the principal people*; (to say nothing of Dr. Oxley, Mr. Little, or Mr. Bramwell,) but he knew that they would say nothing ill of her, and effectually to prevent any enquiry being made of the three he does mention—he says "they would not commit themselves in writing."

(B) This refers to Mr. Sission's having written to Mr. Hill, stating that Mr. Bell was at that time in Hull upon the business, and suspected that it was Mr. H. who had written the letters, that it is worthy of remark, that he continues to remind Mr. S. that he had written to him for information, which was, no doubt, to blind him, as to his being the anonymous writer.

about it. I have not inquired any farther, neither do I intend it. What I wrote you, I wrote in the fear of the Lord; and if you had been my son, or my own brother, I could not have acted more justly towards you. I wrote at your earnest request; and if I had to begin again, I don't see how I could, as an honest man, do otherwise. She has applied to me for a character; I told her I could not help her (A). She begged of Mr. Beal to do it; he would not (B). Mr. Laws told her if he wrote the *white* he must write the *black* (C). Mr. Bramwell has written, and sent it to her; but, of course, you will never see it, because it contains this

(A) Miss B. *did not* apply to him for a character. Mr. Beal brought him to consult with her, and all that passed is related in the account of the interview, (see page 12.) This was the only time Miss B. ever conversed with Mr. H. on the subject. He declared, at that time solemnly, he knew *nothing* against her, and had nothing to do with it.

(B) Mr. Beal never said so. Miss B. consulted him as her Class Leader, and he told her he was utterly at a loss to think what any one could write against her, and signed the certificate of Miss B.'s character.

(C) Miss B. conversed with Robert Laws at the time, when it was first known that some one had injured her; he expressed *great astonishment* what any one could possibly find to write against her, and particularly named, in terms of approbation, her affectionate conduct towards her brother and sister. He declared himself willing to do any thing to prove his innocence. Indeed it was very unlikely that *such a person as Robert Laws* should say any thing to the discredit of Miss B. He was the only Leader that did not sign the certificate of Miss B.'s character, being from home at the time.

clause—^(A) "Dirty in her domestic concerns, and of bad temper"^(A). "It is possible, if she was separated from John and Margaret, (her brother and sister,) that she may make a good wife, or that you may be happy together"^(B): but I durst as well eat fire as recommend it. If you cannot avoid the union then undertake it in the name of the Lord, and *mind that she is entirely separated from John (her brother) and his business.* You are pledged, by every thing honourable and sacred, to keep *me and mine out of sight*; and I trust I shall find you a true man. Dr. O. (Oxley) and they will leave no stone unturned to find me out; but, if you are true, they will never do it. I have wrote nothing out of resentment to them but out of sincere affection for you, and at your earnest

(A) Mr. Bramwell did not introduce such a clause into the certificate of Miss B.'s character. Miss B. having reason to suspect Mr. Hill to be the person who injured her, asked Mr. Bramwell whether he had ever heard any thing against her? *entirely* with a view to learn whether Mr. H. had spoken unfavourably of her;—finding it was as *she suspected*, she requested Mr Bramwell to insert what he had heard, as she hoped, by that means, to open the eyes of Mr. Sissison, believing it was Mr. H. who had also written both the anonymous and other letters. Mr. B. therefore added, that in his opinion, Miss B. possessed a considerable share of susceptibility, and *as he had heard*, she might occasionally be betrayed into a degree of warmth. He had also been told that she was not completely orderly in her domestic concerns, though Mr. B. declared he did not agree with it. The most intimate friends of Miss B. objected to such a clause being inserted, knowing *it was not true*, hence the certificate was signed without it by Mr. B. who wrote it, and signed it, together with seventy-eight other respectable persons who knew her. (See Appendix.)

(B) How was it possible, if Miss B. was the character Mr. H. described her, that the separation from her brother and sister would make her a good wife, and that Mr. S. and *she could be happy together.*

request. They will do every thing to procure a character^(A); but you must be governed by what I have written^(B). I am not conscious of giving any thing a wrong colouring. It is probable they will tell you I have confessed, in order to extract something from you, but I trust you will be firm. If you have not burnt my letters, do it immediately^(C), after making necessary extracts for your private use. I have adopted this mode to prevent the post from being intercepted^(D). Write me when you deem it necessary. O, may God, in his infinite mercy, bless you, and guide you right in all things.

Addressed "To Mr. W. Sission,
currier, Hull."

To be delivered immediately, to none but himself.

Then there was another letter, which is as follows:

This letter had no date, but appears to have been put into the post, August 3, 1821.

My dear Friend,

Your's of the 26th last month, has just come to hand—I hope

(A) They had no difficulty in procuring a character, as any one who was acquainted with Miss B. would have written a good character of her.

(B) The dictatorial spirit of this injunction is worthy of remark.

(C) If his letters contained nothing but truth, why was he so anxious to have them destroyed?

(D) This alludes to his not signing his name to the letter.

you received mine of Monday last—I congratulate you for your firmness^(A) and the course you have taken.—Pray much to God for help, and *despite their threatenings*, they cannot hurt you now, nor never will be able to do it, except you *commit yourself*. Excuse haste, as the post is leaving.

Addressed “To Mr. W. Sission, carrier, Hull.”

To be delivered to *himself* immediately.

Burn this.

This letter also was sent without his name.

Mr. Scarlett said he did not propose to trouble them at the outset with all the letters which had passed between the defendant and Mr. Sission. He would merely observe, that they proceeded in the same style as they had begun, with the same fervour and warmth of friendship and with the same bitterness of malignity and slander. The defendant discovered, however, that he was beginning to be suspected as the author of the anonymous letters. He found that an action would soon be commenced either against Mr. Sission for a breach of promise of marriage, or against himself for the slanders he had disseminated. The jury would observe this fact from a paragraph contained in the following letter, which he wrote on the 17th of August, 1821.

NORTH-SHIELDS, August 17, 1821.

DEAR SIR,—Did you receive my two last, *directed* to be delivered to yourself *only*? I understand *they intend* commencing a prosecution against you immediately for defamation of character^(B). I hope you have not committed yourself into their

(A) This refers to Mr. S. having informed him that he had broken off the connexion with Miss B.

(B) This alludes to Miss B.'s brother having agreed to a law letter being sent to Mr. S. to induce him to give up the slanderous informations which he had received against his sister.

merciless hands; I think you may make a fair stand upon the grounds of your anonymous information, &c.; but you had better lay the whole business before an *able counsellor*.

My friends here feel much for you(A); but there is not one who would like to embroil or implicate himself with it; no, they know them too well, and they know nothing of you; consequently they will not subject themselves to the shafts of vengeance(B) to help you. Besides, it would be difficult to fix upon any thing sufficiently tangible to convict, without the person subjecting himself to ruin(C). Indeed, I do not think any immorality can be proved, and as for saying they are *dirty, poor, quarrelsome, hypocri-*

(A) He styles those individuals his friends, whom he persuaded to believe that he had not written the letters—It is entirely false that they felt for Mr. S. They all expressed themselves as feeling most indignant against him for deserting Miss B. and generally contended that he, himself, or some of his family, had written the anonymous letters, and argued with Miss B.'s friends that they had no proof there were any letters with names, and that it might be all pretence. They all expressed the greatest sympathy for Miss B.

(B) There was nothing like vengeance displayed by any of Miss B.'s friends, every offer was made to have the business settled by arbitration, but he solemnly denied it altogether, and would not allow any investigation.

(C) Was there nothing *tangible*, in being accused of being buried in debt—in being *drunken—dangerous—disreputable, &c.*

tical, slanderous, and malicious(A), though of high importance to you, in a court, it amounts to nothing.

Mr. Scarlett then said that was the reverend preacher's opinion of the law, in which he would unfortunately find himself mistaken, and finished his letter as he had commenced it, with abuse of the plaintiff and her family; for he said,

If they have proceeded, take the advice of counsel, and let me know the result: remember, I am in *this*, and in every thing that is *past*, to be kept out of sight. I merely mention this, as I believe you would lose your life rather than publicly expose me

(A) How widely different Miss B. was from being a *dirty person, quarrelsome, slanderous, or malicious*, which additional charges are now brought against her, is proved by the subjoined testimonial, signed by thirty respectable females*, most of whom have known her from her infancy, and all of them for a number of years.

* We the undersigned do certify that most of us have known Miss Bell from her childhood, and all of us for several years, and further do testify, that her conduct, in every respect, has been truly exemplary. Miss B. from a child, has been remarked for her *sincerity* and peaceable disposition. It has ever been observed that she was an *avowed enemy to slander*. remarkable also for attention to the duties of her family, for her neatness and superior management of business and domestic concerns.

NORTH SHIELDS, August 4, 1822.

Isabella Oxley
Margery Appleby
Mary Lesslie
Margaret Reay
Jane Forrest
Elizabeth Smith
Ann Seath
Martha Pyle
Ann Jackson
Sarah H. Armstrong
Jane Dodds

Ann Brown
Mary Stephenson
Ann Harrison
Lucy Forster
Jane Halliburton
Elizabeth Harrison
Sarah Charleton
Ann Robb
Mary Scott
Ann Lundin

Elizabeth Johnson
Isabella Melvell
Elizabeth Stout
Isabella Reay
Jane Skipsey
Elizabeth Robson
Mary A. Warham
Martha Hessionton
Elizabeth Skipsay
Elizabeth Garbutt

and mine to their tiger-like fury(A). I wish I was nearer to you, that I may have a conversation with you and your brother John, your uncle Young, and Mr. Cookman, if you could trust them; but this would be attended with loss of time and expense, which I can ill afford. Would you like to come here? If you would, you may be at Tynemouth a week or a fortnight (where my family now are,) and nobody know any thing about it. I could easily find out a way for you to see many of our principal friends; and, although they would not commit themselves in laying any thing to their charge(B), yet I think you would find that not one would recommend it.

I am, your's, affectionately,

THOMAS HILL.

N. B. Write as soon as you can.

"To Mr. W. Sissison,
currier, Hull."

The learned counsel then proceeded to observe, that in the month of August a critical moment arrived for all parties in this suit. A certificate of the good character of the plaintiff was signed by a majority of the members of the society to which she belonged and many other respectable persons. This was likely to open the eyes of Mr. Sissison; but, in order to prevent him from being undeceived, the defendant wrote him the following letter:

(A) Not one instance of any thing like fury, was ever displayed by any of Miss B.'s friends; but it cannot be said that none was exhibited in another quarter. "The account of that individual, who witnessed what accompanied the expression.—"I should think it no crime to blow out Mr. Little's brains," and that of those persons assembled at Hull to investigate the business after it had been once in court, when Mr Hill was present, to say nothing of many other instances, is sufficient evidence on this point.

(B) If any one could have laid any thing to their charge, why should they hesitate to do so?

and Dr. O. accuses Mr. Moss, but all this is as false as *they are*. None of us know any thing about it. I have now some reason to believe they were written by an *enemy to me*, but I am not certain of it. If I understand the anonymous, there are allusions to things which cannot be proved; this I told you before; but every thing that I have said is *strictly and literally correct*; yes, I would declare, if I was dying, that she is, from all I have *seen and heard*, a *dirty, bad tempered*, and very *deceitful person*(A), and that *the family* is such as a person of your *name and character* should form no connexion with(B). This is the sole reason why I wrote to you. I have ventured to mention it to my wife, and she thinks I have done perfectly right, but is afraid some of your confidants will divulge, &c. I tell her there is no fear of that. O, my brother, pray much, trust in God and be firm, and you will be delivered.

Mr. Little says their letter is for Mr. C., and that he has said, if nothing can be proved against her moral character, he will divulge the anonymous *writer*, &c.(C) but this I don't believe. Indeed I cannot learn that you have received any thing specific against her moral character(D). I suppose their letter will be sent off to-morrow. There is some talk about her going to live at Liverpool(E). *It is expected by those, who are*

(A) The falsehood of this foul slander has been fully proved by the testimonials of many who had been intimately acquainted with Miss B. for many years.

(B) *How far he differs* from this opinion, by his own publication, is already proved.

(C) Mr. Little declares he *never* said Mr. C. (Cookman) would divulge the anonymous writer.

(D) Mr. H. had certainly himself said *enough* against her moral character, and might *well say* he *could not learn* that Mr. S. had received any thing specific against her, meaning from any one but himself.

(E) A friend of Miss B.'s had invited her to pay a visit at Liverpool.

likely to know, that they will call their creditors together(A): they are in everybody's mouth, and every body fears to have any thing to do with them(B). They say they are determined to go on in the law(C). I hope Mr. Cookman will be firm to you; you cannot have a better friend.

I am, your's, affectionately,

THOMAS HILL.

"Mr. William Sissison, currier, Hull."

(A) They had no creditors—and the falsehood of this wicked assertion is fully proved by the numerous certificates of all the merchants they dealt with.

(B) Mr. H. added equally to the publicity of the affair, by the means he used to persuade the Society that he was as innocent as Miss B.'s friends who wished for the truth, and to have it settled.—The manner they were talked of, and felt for, is evident by the interest excited, as plainly appears by numbers who gave their signatures. The subjoined extract of a letter* from a person who had long known her, is a further proof that she was generally esteemed.

(C) No one concerned ever said they were determined to go on in the law—no effort was left untried to have it settled in the Society, nor had they recourse to the law with Mr. H. until the month of October following, after every other means had failed.

* Having learnt, with astonishment and regret, that an attack has been made on the reputation of Miss Jane Bell, and that too in a manner characteristic enough of an assassin, I should be glad, if by any thing I could say, to repel those base insinuations or any false impressions made on the minds of her friends might be removed: here, indeed, it is not necessary, where she is known, and generally, if not universally esteemed. If the testimony of a disinterested person, who has long been acquainted with her and her family, while living on both sides of the River Tyne, have any weight, and if my filling the offices of Leader and Local-preacher, add any weight to that testimony, I certainly owe it to the person, to truth and to religion, to make known the high esteem which I feel and have long felt for her, both as a woman and a christian. I am a lover of truth, and of all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, &c.

"JOHN REAY."

The learned counsel said, that the jury would observe that he had now brought these letters down to an important period. Mr. Sissison, as he was under no obligation to conceal the anonymous letters which he had received, under whatever obligation he might be to conceal those he had received from Mr. Hill, as he had avowed to Miss Bell that he would not fulfil his engagements with her, and as he admitted that he was acting under the caution suggested to him in those anonymous letters, consented to give one of them up to that lady. They immediately became the subject of inquiry. An investigation was commenced, and the conclusion of it left Miss Bell convinced that the defendant was the author of the anonymous letters which had inflicted upon her such injury and disgrace. She therefore instituted an action against him for the slander he had written. At that time she was ignorant that Mr. Hill had written any thing to her disadvantage, except what was contained in the anonymous letters, in consequence of Mr. Sissison's having some scruples which had restrained him from giving up the other letters he had received from Mr. Hill. The cause came on to be tried at the Northumberland assizes, before the Lord Chief Justice Abbott. Mr. Sissison was called as a witness. He proved that he had received the letter on which the action was brought from the person to whose care it was directed for him. He said he knew nothing of the party who had written them; but other witnesses were called, who swore to their belief that it was in the hand writing of the present defendant. Mr. Sissison was then, on his cross examination, asked whether that anonymous letter was the only cause of his breaking off his intended marriage, and, in his reply, he admitted that it was not. As the action was brought for the loss of the marriage which the plaintiff had sustained in consequence of that letter, the Lord Chief Justice thought that the action could not be sustained, as soon as it appeared that Mr. Sissison had other and powerful reasons for putting an end to the contract of marriage. What did the jury think that these other powerful reasons were?—the other letters certainly which Mr. Sissison had received from the defendant. The plaintiff in consequence retired from court with the unhappy conviction that her

character had been destroyed, and her prospects in life blasted, by the active animosity of her anonymous enemy. With that impression on her mind, she remained in a state of great mental misery and inquietude, as a woman of any sensibility naturally would do when placed in such a distressing situation. They would find that in consequence of the non-suit to which the plaintiff was then obliged to submit, the defendant retired from court triumphing as if he had gained a glorious victory. He was elated, first of all, because Mr. Sissison had not disclosed the contents of his letters, and, secondly, because he had struck down the victim whom he had prosecuted with unrelented ferocity. He must now tell them that Mr. Sissison had been in the court during the whole of the last trial; he heard much of the evidence which was then given; what he heard led him to make further inquiries, and the result of those enquiries was, that he became firmly convinced that the two anonymous letters he had received were written by Mr. Hill. Under these circumstances, he thought that all obligation to secrecy on his part was dissolved; that he had been led by the false pretences of the defendant to solicit communications which the defendant was more anxious to give than he had been willing to receive—that the defendant had acted towards him basely and treacherously—that he had betrayed him, and calumniated an innocent young woman; and he therefore determined, as she had nearly perished from the mental anxiety which she had undergone to place in her hands the various letters he had received from the defendant, to enable her to obtain redress. He had now given to the jury the history of the case, and he would next call their attention to the real grounds of the action. If the case were to rest now, as it did before, upon the anonymous letters only, and if Mr. Sissison should say that he had broken off his marriage with Miss Bell for other causes, besides those contained in the different libels written by the defendant, the case must come to the same termination as it had done before; but if they should find that the anonymous letters were written by the defendant, and that Mr. Sissison had no *other reason* for breaking off the marriage than *the letters* which he received from

Mr. Hill, in reply to the communication which the anonymous letters led him to make to that individual, then there could be no doubt that both in law and in justice their verdict must be for the plaintiff. Then came the question what damages ought they to award her for the malicious slanders in which the defendant had indulged at her expence? That might, perhaps, be a matter of little consequence to the defendant, as he understood that he (Hill) had said, that let the verdict be what it would, his property was secure against the effects of it. He would, however, ask them, in considering their verdict, to reflect what sort of a man he must be, who, to satisfy his enmity towards her brother, who stood in the way of his worldly interest, could calumniate an innocent young woman, and frustrate her of a marriage into which she was going to enter, with every prospect of happiness and success? Could they conceive any thing more odious and detestable? Could he, if he were to select any individual, of whom he knew nothing, represent him in terms more calculated to damn him for ever, in their good opinion, than by stating that he had been guilty of the practices which he now charged upon this defendant? And yet he called himself a professor of religion—he walked in the fear of the Lord—he was a minister of Jesus Christ—he did every thing in his name, and by his sanction, and to his honour, and to his glory. Could they conceive any thing more horrible and atrocious than to perpetuate such deeds under such professions? *Religion and heaven sanction nothing that was immoral, nothing that was unkind, nothing that was cruel and malevolent.* He was afraid that we were fast approaching to a period when religion was to be made the stalking horse to crime; and that the country would have to undergo once more the same ordeal with that which it had undergone formerly, when such a view was taken of religion as made it not only sanction but authorize every species of horror. He would not be so unjust as to say that the Methodists in general entertained such sentiments. If there were amongst them any men, as he had no doubt that there were many, who were liberal and sincere in their professions of religion, and whose morality was the offspring of genuine piety and virtue, they would feel that

they could not do any thing more useful to the faith they professed, than to hold up to the detestation of mankind a man who was guilty of such practices as he had been compelled unwillingly to detail to them. It was with disgust and shame he contemplated the proceedings of the defendant. When he saw morals corrupting under the name of religion, he began to tremble for the existence of society —He could not conceive any thing worse than the violation of truth, confidence, justice, benevolence, brotherly love, affection, charity, and kindness committed under the name of Jesus Christ. If he had the honor to address twelve men of the same profession of faith with the defendant, he would ask them to expel from among them the wolf who had stolen into the flock in sheep's clothing, with the intention of devouring and destroying it. With these observations he would leave the cause in their hands merely adding, that the plaintiff had been *overwhelmed with misery and despair*, and that whatever damages they might give could not be too great for the wanton injury she had received from the defendant.

James Kelly Pollock, examined by Mr. Coltman.—I am acquainted with the defendant. I am a printer at North Shields, and have printed from his manuscripts. I know his hand-writing. This letter (looking at one of the anonymous letters produced) I believe to be in the hand-writing of the defendant. Some of the letters are very much like his characters. If I had received that letter, I should have believed it to be in his hand-writing. Looking at the other anonymous letter, the witness said, "I should suppose that letter to be in his hand-writing also." The other letters read by Mr. Scarlett in his speech, were then identified by the witness as the hand-writing of the defendant.

Cross-examined by Mr. Pollock.—The defendant was formerly a minister at North-Shields. I have heard him preach. I have seen him write frequently, when he came to my office to get printing done. I was in the habit of printing preacher's plans. These plans give the rotation of the preachers through the

circuit. They were in manuscript. He did not write them in my presence; but he has made erasures and amendments in them in my sight. I never saw him write as much as the amount of one of those letters. I cannot recollect whether I ever received a letter from him. I have also printed hand-bills in his manuscripts, about collections at sermons which he was going to preach. I am sufficiently acquainted with his hand-writing to know that the letters produced are in his character. The two anonymous letters I saw first about a week ago. They were in the hands of the plaintiff when I saw them. She shewed them to me. There was only my own wife in company with me when I first saw them. Mr. Hill quitted North-Shields about three years ago. I have not seen him write since he quitted it. I had no doubt about any of the other letters shewn to me, because I saw that they had his signature to them. The other letters are in the same character. My opinion, as to the anonymous letters, is formed from the similarity between the characters in them, and those in his acknowledged letters. When I first saw the anonymous letters, I saw other letters with them, and I compared them altogether. From that comparison I drew the conclusion I have stated.

Re-examined by Mr. Scarlett.—The defendant's hand is a particular hand, and I recollect it well, though I have not seen it for so long a time. My conviction at the time I first saw the anonymous letters, was, that they were in the defendant's hand-writing. My conviction was so before I saw the other letters, with his signature. It is not his general hand, but a disguised hand. My conviction was confirmed when the other letters were shewn to me.

By the Court.—I expressed an opinion upon the two anonymous letters before I saw the other letters. All the letters were not produced together. The two anonymous letters were produced together. I was not apprized before I saw the letters that the plaintiff shewed me, that my opinion would be asked as to who had written the letters.

Dr. Oxley, examined by Mr. Brougham.—I am a physician at North Shields, I know the defendant, and have known him several years. I know the plaintiff's family; they were tenants of mine. I know Miss Jane Bell. She is a single woman. I know Mr. Sissison, but I don't know any thing about his property. There is a religious sect called Methodists in that part of the country. I was formerly a member of it. They appointed persons called Local Preachers to preach at their circuit. They are appointed by a Local Preacher's Meeting; they are proposed by a Preacher, and approved of by the Meeting. The rotation is fixed at that meeting, which is held quarterly. The Preachers preach according to that plan. It is the practice of the Methodists to suspend, occasionally, Preachers for various offences. Mr. Sissison was, I believe, a Methodist. Margaret, the sister of the plaintiff, and also the late Mr. Bell, her brother, were Methodists. He was a Local Preacher. Mr. Bell and the defendant had been acquainted with each other in the Society. I have heard the defendant mention that Mr. Bell had taken a decided part against him in some discussions of the Society. I also heard Mrs. Hill say, Mr. Hill told her, that Mr. Bell had taken a decided part against him with the Blyth Society. Before those disputes, the defendant mentioned Mr. Bell favourably; but, after then, I do not recollect ever hearing the defendant mention him favourably. What I have told you, as the words of Mrs. Hill, was said in conversation between me and her. Whilst we were talking upon the subject, Mr. Hill came in; Mr. Hill joined us; we were talking about this unpleasant affair. He said that Miss Bell had sent a message to him, desiring to see him. He said that he had sent back word to her that she knew where he lived, and, if she wanted him, that she might come to him. Mrs. Hill then said, "Why did you so?" Mr. Hill replied, "because I have been ill treated by Miss Bell's family." Mrs. Hill said, "not by Miss Bell, I am sure." "No," said Mr. Hill, "but I have been by her brother; he took a decisive part against me in the business of the Blyth Society."

I have seen the defendant write several times, and have received letters from him. Judging from these circumstances, I conceive those letters, (looking at the anonymous letters) to be his hand writing. I have heard the defendant speak regarding these anonymous letters. I heard him say that he believed that his hand had been imitated, and that some *radical* rascal had written them to ruin him and his family. I heard him say in the vestry meeting, in the month of August, 1821, when this business came before it, that he knew nothing against Miss Bell's moral and religious character—that he had written no ill of her in letters to Hull, where Mr. Sissison lived. I was present at a vestry meeting in September in the same year. I heard Mr. Hill say that he had himself received a letter from the anonymous writer. He was requested to produce that letter, but declined to do so. I pressed him to produce it, and also observed that that letter came to convince, what Mr. Hill called his enemies, that he was innocent. I don't exactly recollect his answer, but I recollect that in his presence, and with his consent, Mr. Beal pledged himself to produce it to Mr. Little, myself, and Mr. Potter, at his own house, if we would call upon him. I went to Beal's; but Mr. Beal then said he had changed his mind, and was not inclined to show it. He gave no reason for so doing. I conceive Miss Bell's family to be in a respectable situation of life as trades-people. I know that a certificate of character was given to this lady by her friends. I attended Miss Bell medically. Before the receipt of these letters, she was in a good state of health; since then she has been in a weak, nervous, and debilitated state of health. She has continued in that state, more or less, to the present time. Her brother is dead, and he died about one year and a half ago, in consequence of an accident.

Cross-examined by Mr. Pollock.—I have lived at North-Shields for twenty-five or twenty-six years. The defendant was a Methodist preacher there in 1821. He left at the usual period he was to leave. The appointment of preachers is from year to year. There

is a limited period, three years, beyond which they must not stay. Mr. Hill stayed two years. Besides the minister, there are local preachers; I am one; Mr. Bell was another. There are some hundreds, members of our society, at North-Shields. I left this society in consequence of this unpleasant business. I was not suspended. Mr. Bell was not suspended on account of the Blyth quarrel. He left the Society on account of this business. There was a chapel there. I had no quarrel with the defendant. I know that I was examined on the last trial by Mr. Brougham about what he called the Oxley controversy. I can explain it if you wish. I was present at the trial in 1822. Miss Bell was not in court, on that occasion. Mr. Scarlett and Mr. Brougham were counsel for the defendant. I recollect that the case, on that occasion, ended in a non-suit. I never said any thing then about "radical rascal." I had *not forgotten* that expression, but no question was asked me about it. I mentioned the expression to many people, both before and after the trial. I believe the earliest time I saw the first anonymous letter was in Aug. 1821. There were meetings about them. I repeatedly saw Miss Bell about them. I know Mr. Thomas Rodham, a grocer, in North-Shields; he was formerly a clerk in the post-office. I know, both from himself and Miss Bell, that he saw one anonymous letter. I do not know that he said it was impossible that the same person could have written both it, and one bearing Mr. H.'s signature. I never heard Miss Bell say that such was his opinion. Miss Bell told me that he had made some observations about it; that he said that several of the letters in it were *very like* some in a letter addressed to Mr. Heppel, of Blyth, by Mr. Hill, the defendant. I had no unpleasant conversation with Mr. Rodham on the subject—we had a difference of opinion. I mentioned it to Miss Bell. My opinion was, that the letters were certainly written by the defendant, but Mr. Rodham merely thought that there was a strong similarity in the characters of Mr. Hill's letters, and those of the anonymous epistle which he saw. I have seen Mr. Hill write memorandums of the disbursements and receipts at the

quarterly meetings. I have also ~~seen~~ him write at his own house. I know Mr. Wingrave; I do not recollect that I said to him if that action would not do, something else would: but it is probable that I might have said so, alluding not to any future action, but to an investigation in the society to which the defendant belongs. To the best of my recollection, I believe that I have not distributed any publication against Mr. Hill. I have seen a publication which Miss Bell published on the subject, and also a placard, which she did not write, nor did she know who wrote it. I do not recollect ever having distributed these pamphlets or placards, but I may have lent them. I never sent any of them by the post.—I may have lent the pamphlet to five or six persons. I have seen about ~~any~~ copies of it. It was printed since the last trial. There were other papers written about it, but I do not know by whom, they were not written by Miss Bell, nor did she know who wrote them. I have not made many journeys on this case. I went once to Hull purposely about it, and only once.

Re-examined.—There was only one letter produced at the last trial. At that time I had an idea that there were other letters, besides that on which the action was founded. Miss Bell, to my knowledge, was acquainted with their existence, before the cause was taken into court. The witness was here shewn the different letters, which he identified as the defendant's writing. The first time I saw them was long after the trial. I do not know the exact time when Mr. Sissison gave up the letters, but I believe it was in the month of October last. At the meetings which took place on these letters, something was said about Miss Bell's intended marriage with Mr. Sissison, in the defendant's presence. I stated, in the presence of the defendant, that the object of them must have been to break off the marriage. He denied all knowledge of them, and at one meeting of them, he said, that a radical rascal must have written them.

W. Little, examined by Mr. Scarlett.—I live at North-Shields.

I know the hand-writing of the defendant. I believe these letters to be written by him. I was generally at the meetings when these letters were talked about. I went in August, 1821, to Potter's shop, where I met Mr. Hill. We talked together about bringing his letter to Mr. Heppel, and the anonymous letters to the meeting, to be compared. Mr. Hill objected for some time, but as we were all against him he consented. Shortly afterwards he seemed alarmed. He started up suddenly, and said, "you shall point out no comparisons." I said to him, "Mr. Hill, what are you afraid of, if you have not written the anonymous letters?" I ought to state that he had been charged with it previously. The conversation dropped there, and the letters never were taken. On one evening, when there was going to be a leader's meeting, he came to my house and spoke to me on the subject. I understood him to say that he had not written any letters to Hull, I did not know of any quarrel in particular between the plaintiffs and the defendant's family. I believe this is the letter which was spoken about as written to Mr. Heppel.

Cross-examined by Mr. Tindall.—I believe the anonymous letter was put into my hands on the 3rd of August. I did shew it to several persons, amongst others to Mr. Beal, Mr. Potter, and Mr. Owen. I never said to them that it was the hand writing of a woman. When it was first shewn to me, I had made up my mind that Mr. Hill could not have written it. I never could have supposed that he had written it, because the anonymous letters referred to the Methodist Preachers, and he was one of them. I scarcely looked at the letter. I saw it was in a small hand, and I said that it was like a woman's hand. I never said that I thought it to be Mr. Beal's. I never made any observation to that effect to Mr. Beal. I shewed it to Mrs. Duncan, because she accused me of accusing Mr. Hill wrongfully. When she saw it, she said it was very much like his hand-writing. I have not collected any money for Miss Bell in this trial, nor in the last. I called upon nobody to subscribe for her. I lent the pamphlet to be read amongst my friends. She shewed me her pamphlet. I objected to some of it as being too severe.

Mr. Scarlett objected to this mode of examination, unless the pamphlet were put in.

The witness, before the objection was heard, contrived to speak out—"that the part of the pamphlet to which I objected, was that, stating what Hill had said, that he would blow my brains out*."

He was stopped by *Mr. Tindal*, whom he declared to be too fastidious, and also too catching. He afterwards proceeded—

I took several journeys on this subject. I went twice purposely to Hull, once to meet Mr. Hill. The first time he did not come. I went a second time a fortnight afterwards.

Re-examined.—I was at meetings in August and in September, on the business. Mr. Hill then endeavoured to get Miss Bell expelled, for, as he said, defaming his character as the writer of the anonymous letters. When he made that charge against her, we said that we were afraid that she had but too much reason to make it. Miss Bell was never expelled from the society, but she left it some time afterwards.

Cross examined.—I swear that she was not expelled. There was a division in it, of sixteen to eight against her on the charge, from his account, that she was defaming his character. I believe that it was Mr. Hill's motion. He puts every motion. I do not know who proposed it.

Re-examined.—He was chairman of a meeting which was to pass sentence on his own conduct.

By the Court.—I never distributed any of the pamphlets, they were distributed in a regular way.

* It is necessary to observe, that Mr. Little's objection to this expression was, from an idea that Mr. H. might do what he had stated, he should think *no crime*. This was the only part to which he did object, on the contrary, he observed, with others, that Miss B. had kept back various strong expressions which had been repeated.

Mr. Justice Bayley—Then tell her not to distribute them in future among the Judges*. I received one of them myself about two years ago. I only mention this to prevent other people from doing so likewise. Such conduct is extremely culpable, and I always make a point of noticing it, when it comes before me.

John Potter examined by Mr. Coltman —[The anonymous letter was put into the witness's hand]--I think there is a great likeness between that letter and Mr. Hill's writing. If I had received it, I should have suspected it to have come from Mr. Hill, from the general turn of the letters, I have the same opinion with regard to the other anonymous letter. I recollect hearing Mr. Hill say, that Mr. R. Beal had a letter from the anonymous writer—that any body, who liked, might know the contents, by calling on Mr. Beal. I went shortly after to Mr. Beal's, and he read part of it to me†. I know something about the dispute between the late Mr. Bell and Mr. Hill, about the Blyth Chapel. Mr. Hill told me that Mr. Bell had identified himself in the dispute between him and the Blyth leaders. That dispute related to a collection which Mr. Hill had ordered for the connexion generally.

Cross-examined by Mr. Alderson.—They made a collection according to his orders; but wished to keep part of it for themselves. There is a sect called "Radical Methodists." I was subpoenaed on the last trial by the plaintiff; but I was not examined. I have not seen the defendant write since that time. I have always been of the opinion I have now expressed.

John Carr, a school-master, who corresponded with the defendant as a leader, gave it as his opinion that the anonymous letters were written by the defendant.

* It is proper to state that Miss B. did not send, nor cause to be sent, one of the pamphlets to this or any other Judge.

† It will be remembered that it is stated in the foregoing pages, that Mr. Hill had given Mr. Beal an extract from a letter, which he pretended, had come from the anonymous writer; and it is to this extract that Mr. Potter referred, as Mr. Beal declared he had not seen any letter, but only an extract.

Daniel Lyall, a timber merchant, at Bolton, in Lancashire.—I know the hand-writing of the defendant. I believe these letters to be in his hand-writing. I had some conversation with him about his property. I asked him what the consequence of the trial would be. I said that I was afraid it would ruin him. He said he had provided for that; but how he did not tell me, and I do not know^(A).

Mr. Scarlett now proposed to read the anonymous letters.

Mr. Pollock objected, that no proof had yet been given that these letters had ever reached any body, and therefore contended that they could not be read.

Mr. Justice Bayley said, in all probability, the plaintiff's counsel could cure that defect.

Mr. Scarlett said, certainly, that he could. He intended to call *Mr. Sissison*.

The Associate was here proceeding to read the first letter from one of the briefs for the purpose of saving time, when

Mr. Pollock suggested that there was something in the letter which he was sure would not be in the brief, and which he was very desirous to hear read.

(A) It is worthy of remark that this witness was an intimate friend of *Mr. Hill*, and had received many letters from him. He was subpoenaed by him on the first trial, but, as the cause ended in a non-suit, he was not called. Between the trials, *Mr. L.* had an opportunity of seeing and comparing the anonymous letters with *Mr. Hill's* letters, and declared that had he sworn they were not *Mr. H.'s* writing, for which purpose he was subpoenaed, he should have perjured himself. At the time he thought *Mr. Hill* innocent, he was one of those actively employed in collecting money for him at Bolton, from which place, and the neighbourhood, they sent him seventy pounds.

Mr. Scarlett observed that the note to which *Mr. Pollock* alluded, was not on the letter when it was originally received by *Mr. Sissison*.

Mr. Justice Bailey was clearly of opinion that *Mr. Pollock* had no right to have any thing read but the original letter, if *Mr. Pollock* would look at the letter he would see that one of the post marks was 12th of June, 1821 ; it was evident that the letter had been turned, and, on the reverse, was another post-mark, "Hull, June 15, 1821." The note appended to it purports it to be a letter sent to A. E. Farrar, Methodist Chapel, York^(A), and showed that it could not have been written at the time the letter first reached *Mr. Sissison*.

Mr. Pollock took another objection ; there was a variance between the letter and the record. In the one it was *Sission*, and in the other *Sissison*. The objection was overruled. In reading the letter, it was found that it had been torn at the corner, and that of the word "instantly," nothing was left but certain fragments of letters which were either *tty* or *tly*.

Mr. Justice Bayley said, that some person must be called who had seen the letter before it was torn. The plaintiff must give evidence that the word *instantly* had been in the letter, or he must direct the jury not to find a verdict for her upon that libel.

Mr. Scarlett contended that the context showed that the word must have been " instantly."

Mr. Alderson said, that it was no such thing ; it might be " constantly," or, in a letter like this " incontinently."

(A) It was a note which *Mr. Sissison* wrote to *Mr. A. E. Farrar*, Methodist Preacher, on the receipt of the anonymous letter, to enquire if he could give him any information as to who the writer could be.

Mr. Justice Bayley.—Or “immediately;” but you will perhaps allow this letter to be read conditionally at present, the plaintiff undertaking to call evidence to establish the point.

Mr. Pollock would be better pleased if the business were to proceed regularly. They had better call Mr. Sission.

Mr. Scarlett said, he intended to do so. It mattered very little whether this letter was compared or not at present with the record, as there was a multiplicity of other libels. Besides, as the letter was in the defendant's hand writing, he had a right to read it as unconnected with the record.

Mr. Justice Bailey said, that the learned counsel certainly had a right to read the letter in the light in which he now proposed to read it.

The anonymous letters were then read, as were also the following letters which had been before proved to be in the hand writing of the defendant :—

MY DEAR BROTHER,—Since writing you yesterday, I have received the inclosed(A), which I thought I would send you, merely for the sake of the information conveyed in the lines *underlined with red*, Dr. Oxley, John, and I believe Nevison, have been the persons who have gone from house to house to get signatures. Many objected to sign, because they knew so little of the family, and because my name and Mr. Moss's were not at the head(B). They were all assured that the paper was merely to satisfy a *certain gentleman that Miss B. was not a bad woman, and to counteract the bad effect of the anonymous letters, which are universally con-*

(A) A copy of the certificate of Miss B.'s character.

(B) No person was asked to sign the certificate who did not know the family. One or two Methodists did enquire why Mr. Hill and Mr. Moss had not signed it, but in general it was known that Mr. H. was suspected, and Mr. Moss was much averse to his being blamed.

demned as unfair and scurrilous(A). They told Beal, Owen, and Wingrave, that if they would sign, the writer of the anonymous would come to light(B). They replied, they did not think her religious. Owen says he talked to John an hour about it, and said that he would not recommend her to you, or any body else, and that if he thought the letter was to be used in any respect against you, he would not sign it, and Mr. Beal and others, I am told, said the same(C). John said all that they wanted was the name of the anonymous writer, whom Mr. Cookman knew, and whom he would give up when the letter arrived(D). But you see *all they want is, the names of your real correspondents*, that they may visit them and you with every chastisement in their power. I believe Dr. Oxley means to bring the letter himself, and if you and your confidential friends are not very firm, we shall have nothing but destruction. I am sure you and Mr. C. must be convinced upon a review of my letters, that I acted as tenderly as I

(A) It was never stated by any one, that the certificate was for such a purpose, nor was the term *bad woman* on any occasion used.

(B) No one ever made such a statement as this, they were not in doubt as to who the anonymous writer was.

(C) Such reply was never made, Mr. Owen's conversation with Mr. Bell, was on his being averse to lay the blame on Mr. H. He never said he would not recommend Miss B. On the contrary, in a conversation which she had with him, he expressed himself very indignant against the person who had injured her, and, in observing that he had known her many years in South and North Shields, declared he had never heard or known any thing against her. It is well known the minds of Messrs. Beal and Owen were so opposed to Mr. S. as to prevent them giving any such reason.

(D) Mr. B never stated this to any one, *he merely said* that he wished to clear his sister's character from such false charges as were made against her. He was too well convinced from the time he first saw the original anonymous letter who was the writer.

could, and I am now more satisfied than ever that if I had said less, I should not have done justice to you. I am not conscious that I have said a word too much, and I might have said more. However, I must say, that though I believe she is *not seriously indisposed*, yet I feel very sorry for her, and I wish you had been advised by me, and have broken it off more slowly(A). But it is done, and you must make the best of it. *This is their last effort, and if this fails, all their law and vengeance which they threaten you and me and my wife B), and your other correspondents with, will not have a foot to stand upon.* I am glad Mr. C. is your counsellor. From his age, experience, good sense, and respectability, I should think you cannot have a better(C); but he must beware of Dr. Oxley and John, for they are capable of deceiving any body(D). If Mr C. is staggered at the number of names upon the letter, and supposes I have made any wrong impression upon your mind, then I advise you to write personally, and with promise of secrecy, to Mr. Beal, builder, Mr Owen, currier, Mr. Laws, shop-keeper, and to any of the others, to know whether they *can recommend her to you for a wife(E).* I wish you had done this at the first, but the wish is useless, I am more in the dark than ever about the anonymous. Beal, Owen, Laws, Matthews, Little, Win-

(A) Miss B. *was seriously* indisposed, as could be proved by her medical attendant.

(B) No one ever imputed any blame to Mrs. Hill, nor were there any other correspondents than himself.

(C) Whilst *pretending* to be glad that Mr. Cookman was his adviser, it is evident he was in great dread of that gentleman's discerning the truth.

(D) No instance can be named where these individuals had deceived any one.

(E) He knew that the persons he names were influenced to believe his assertions of innocence, and therefore blamed Miss B. and her friends, for *imputing* the anonymous letters to him.

grave, and all the Leaders, believe they were written by an enemy(A), to ruin me and the Circuit, and Mr. Moss and myself are nearly of the same opinion.

I am, your's, respectfully,

THOMAS HILL.

This letter bears the same date as the preceding one.

N. B. Don't fail to give me all the information you may deem necessary. My wife says if your adviser was any body else besides Mr. Cookman, she should be extremely unhappy, but she has the greatest and most entire confidence in him.

NORTH-SHIELDS, August 21, 1821.

“ Mr. William Sissison,
carrier, Hall.”

DEAR BROTHER,—I think it proper to inform you, that every effort is to be used to induce you to marry; and it is said, that your mind is so much changed, that there will be little or no difficulty(B). I believe she has about sixty signatures to her letter, and forty of them at least know nothing of her; but they signed because Mr. Wawn had drawn it up; and because Little, Beal, Bramwell and Owen, had put their names to it; and also, through the infamous representation of John and Dr. O.(C), they say they will

(A) However he might at *that period* succeed in influencing *some* of those he names, to believe him not guilty. It was assuredly not the case with Mr. Mathews or Mr. Little, and several other of the Leaders.

(B) No one ever said Mr. S.'s mind was changed, though it was hoped that he would be brought to see how much he was imposed upon, and how deeply Miss B. was injured.

(C) Every individual who signed the certificate knew Miss B. and not one gave the example of others as a reason for doing so, there was no infamous representation, neither was any threatening of law ever heard of.

print it; but *they* above gentlemen threaten them with a prosecution if they do. I had a conversation with Mr. Beal, Mr. Moss, and Mr. M'Nicol^(A), the chairman, whom she thinks her warm friend, the other day; his opinion is, that you should firmly resist every application for the names of your correspondents, and all con-

(A) The manner in which Mr. M'Nicol received the account, and his opinion on the subject is already explained in page 17. It is necessary further to observe, that Miss B. had every reason to believe that Mr. M'N. was her friend, both from the feeling and sympathy he expressed for her, and his assurances of assistance. Miss B. was an entire stranger to Mr. M'N. but he observed that a testimonial, signed by so many respectable persons, fully cleared her character. That he wrote to Mr. Cookman, as he promised to herself and her late brother, is proved by the subjoined letter* to Mr. B. which was the only one Mr. C. ever wrote to him. This letter also fully clears Mr. C. from carrying on a correspondence, and divulging the secret, which is a fact proper to be known from what will shortly appear.

* HULL, Oct, 4, 1831.

Mr. BELL,

DEAR SIR,—I was favoured with your's this morning, and what shall I say in reply. I see the unhappy affair assumes new aspects, and where it will terminate I cannot tell. You know, from the conversations which we had together on the subject, that I must preserve a strict neutrality, and therefore you will not be disappointed on receiving this, that there is not a single hint as to the contents of those letters which have been the subject of enquiry. The testimonial, signed by so many respectable persons, establishes, beyond a doubt, the propriety and excellency of your sister's character, and therefore the charges instituted against her in the anonymous letters, as they are strictly false, must have been dictated by vindictive feeling. I wish you would be so kind, when you see the Rev. D. M'Nicol, as to make an apology to him for my not answering his letter. The reason which induced me not to do it, was---that being but a THIRD person in the business, and consulted only in the capacity of a confidential friend, I could not consistently transmit one iota of information, without betraying the trust which had been reposed in me, and as I had stated this to you before, a letter to Mr. M'Nicol, could not have been of any service to the parties.

I am, with my best respects to your sister and family,

Dear Sir,

Your's, very respectfully.

GEORGE COOKMAN.

nexion with the family. Pay no attention to what Mr. Naylor says(A). He knew her eight or nine years ago, but he has been a

(A) This caution arose from a fear that the opinion which Mr. Naylor (a Methodist Preacher) had given of Miss B. might reach Mr. S. which however, was not the case. Mr. N. had been acquainted by the late Dr. Taft (Methodist Preacher) with the injury done to Miss B. and like all others, who knew her, he declared how undeserving she was of such a character.—Mr. Hill himself was determined *not to pay any attention to what Mr. Naylor said*, A respectable friend of Miss B. wrote to Mr. Naylor, he being Chairman of the District in which Mr. Hill was stationed in 1824 and 1825, requesting him to endeavour to obtain a District Meeting to investigate the business, and it appeared by Mr. Naylor's reply that as the Conference had previously declined looking into it, he could not officially call a District Meeting. Mr. N. however, wrote to Mr. H. informing him of the circumstance, and stated that as their financial District Meeting was approaching, at which Mr. H. would have to attend, he, (Mr. N.) should have some conversation with Mr. H. on the subject.—To Mr. N.'s surprise, Mr. H. did not attend, which, as Superintendent of a Circuit, was quite expected. This caused Mr. N. to write to him, and express his surprise, and to observe that this shrinking from investigation, made many of his brethren in the ministry, with himself, believe him guilty. After Mr. N. gave this opinion, Mr. H. wrote him a letter of a very coarse nature.

The subjoined certificate and extract of a letter, both from Methodist Preachers, further prove that there was but one opinion respecting the character and conduct of Miss B.

This is to certify that I have been intimately acquainted with Miss Bell for more than twelve years. Since I left Shields, she has repeatedly been a visitor in my house, at one time, about three months together; and, during that time, I have never known any thing in her unbecoming the christian character.

H. TAFT, M. D,

Birmingham, Dec. 4, 1821.

Having heard that base and infamous falsehoods have been charged against a person, with whom and family I have been intimate ever since I came to Shields, Miss Jane Bell, lately of South Shields, now of North Shields, from a love of truth, and as a friend to Mr. Bell's family, I think it is only doing the lady justice to say, that nothing of this nature has ever been heard of, neither have such things ever been laid to her charge, &c.

JOHN DUNGATE, Local Preacher.

N

stranger to her ever since. John has been *drinking, whoring, swearing and blaspheming*, for a fortnight or three weeks in the most awful manner ; and it is now quite clear that he has been doing this, less or more, for three or four years, and she has been using every effort to cover his wickedness(A). She and John have spread it through the town, that your correspondents have informed you that she is a *whore, a cheat and a thief*. I was asked by *Little, Potter and Nevison*, whether I had said so, or knew of any body who had(B). I told them I would not be interrogated upon such a subject, but, as they had warmly *espoused her cause*, I would say, if it was necessary, that she was a woman of forty years of age, very *dirty* in her *domestic* concerns and in her *person, poor and without any trade*(C); that as far as I could judge, she could pray like an angel any half hour, and vituperate and calumniate with any body the next ; and they, as honest men, ought, if required, to say the same(D). After all, I acknowledged

(A) It is to be lamented that excessive grief occasioned by such cruel treatment, together with the disappointment and mortification of not being able to obtain redress in the Society to which she belonged, did throw Mr. B. off his guard ; he gave up his ticket, and would be no longer a member, but that he had been guilty of these vile practices, and, for any length of time, is utterly and entirely false.

(B) No one ever heard Miss B. or her brother say that such information had been given, neither did they ever hear or repeat any of these vile epithets. Messrs. Little, Potter, and Nevison solemnly declare that they never heard, or repeated a single word of the kind, and that they never asked Mr. H. such a question.

(C) The three persons he mentions, further declare that Mr. H. never, at any time, made such assertions to them, or those of them that knew would have contradicted the statement respecting Miss B.'s age, which was not true, as also her being *dirty, poor, and without trade*.

(D) They also declare that he *never did before them make any such charge, or they would have contradicted it to his face ; as it was well known that Miss B. was a decided enemy to slander.* (see the Certificate, page 64).

that she was to be pitied; that all her misfortunes were through the bad conduct of John(A); that if she was removed from him, she may become *clean, useful, harmless, and happy*; that she may make a *good wife*, but that I neither durst nor would recommend her; I think they have left our chapel, this pleases all our friends(B). They say they will leave off business directly(C).

May God ever bless you and direct you. If you write to her let it be in a friendly manner; for I should suppose she very much loved you, and she, of course, keenly feels that she has lost a home(D) and a good husband.

I am, your's, affectionately,

THOMAS HILL.

NORTH SHIELDS, September 10, 1821.

"Mr. W. Sissison, currier, Hull.

NORTH SHIELDS, September 22, 1821.

DEAR BROTHER,—The circumstances under which you wrote to my wife, and the consequences in which I saw you and your family would be involved, together with the affection I felt for you

(A) Miss B. never had any misfortune until Mr. H. brought them upon her and that they were occasioned by his enmity to her brother is a certain fact.

(B) Many individuals as well as they, left the chapel, on account of this unpleasant affair; but it was not a *source of pleasure* to those he terms the *principal people*, on the contrary they said that Methodism would be ruined in Shields, that there would be nothing but empty seats to preach to, so many were leaving the chapel.

(C) They were obliged to decline their business—they were brought into such distress of mind as not to be able to attend it.

(D) Miss B. only felt as it was proper and natural she should feel, from a knowledge of Mr. Sissison's worth, but it is a *well known fact* that her grief was not the loss of a *home*. She had, at that time, an excellent home, and in the prospect of leaving it she was not ambitious of having a better.

on your family account, prompted me to become your deliverer. One communication necessarily drew after it another, and although I have written you nothing but the truth, yet without great care I shall have to suffer for the kindness I have done you.

On Monday evening last, she boasted that she had obtained *two letters, one from Hull*, and another from a place a hundred miles north of Shields, with my name to them, and that they were line for line, and word for word, the same as the anonymous, and what John heard you say or read from other letters; and that now it was certain I was the author of the whole(A), and that she was going to Mr. M'Nicol and Mr. Walmsley, to get a District Meeting immediately. This very much alarmed my wife and our principal friends(B). As soon as I knew of it, I gave them the fullest assurance that I knew nothing about the anonymous, and that the whole was a wilful lie, fabricated on purpose to get information.

(A) Nothing can possibly exceed the falsehood of this account. Miss B. *never boasted* in any such manner, nor did any individual ever hear her make such a statement. But when the letter, bearing Mr. H.'s signature, which he wrote to Mr. Heppel, of Blyth, and the anonymous letters that were written three days after, were compared, and all the striking similarities of expression, the same passage of Scripture, the same paper, &c. &c. as is explained in page 14, were noticed, many of her friends were convinced that Mr. H. was the writer of the anonymous letter.

(B) Miss B. never stated that she was going to Mr. M'Nicol; nor had she any thoughts of going to Mr. Walmsley. It was by the particular request of Mr. Beal that she went with a message from him, stating that he would be first to sign a requisition for a District Meeting. Mr. M'N. expressed his surprise that Miss B. had not gone to see Mr. Walmsley, as he was come into the neighbouring Circuit from Hull, and, it was by his recommendation that she went, and Mr. Walmsley declared if it was a business of his, he would have his character cleared, and requested Miss B. to tell Mr. M'N. that, in his opinion, there ought to be a District Meeting.

Inquiry took place, and the result is this:—She has obtained a letter which I sent to a bad man in Blyth(A), which has the passage from Proverbs, which is in one of your's, which amounts to nothing, and she has received a letter from Mr. Cookman, but I cannot learn the contents, but it cannot serve her purpose; she says at present, that she expects one every day that will(B). I have had some talk with Mr. Walmsley, he seems to know nothing of you, and to have no acquaintance with Mr. C. I and Mr. Moss, gave him our word, that we know nothing of the anonymous, and he after hearing of the family, was satisfied that your correspondents had done you an incalculable kindness(C), though he was afraid they would have for ever to repent it, as either you or Mr. C. would be persuaded to betray them. Now, my dear brother, in order that my wife's mind may be more at rest upon this subject, though she says she can place the fullest confidence in Mr. C. and in order that they may not have it in their power to bring it into court, which, is the only thing I dread, both on *your account, my own, and the cause of God in this place.* I request that you will *send me back or burn every scrap of writing* I have sent you, and that you and Mr. C. will not send any paragraph of my writing to any body, or make use of my name either directly or indirectly

(A) Mr. Lionel Heppel is a respectable pious character, has many years been a useful Leader in the Methodist Society, until the unpleasant affair at Blyth caused him, and many others, to leave the Society.

(B) Miss B. never stated that she expected a letter from Mr. Cookman that would serve her purpose.

(C) Mr. H. on hearing that Mr. Walmsley had been made acquainted with the business, went to him, but his statements failed of convincing Mr. W. who gave his opinion to various individuals in the Circuit. He could not consistently give the opinion Mr. H. states; as he expressed himself quite differently to those persons with whom he conversed.

to any body, about this business. This is the only way to secure you and myself from their cruelty. Write me immediately, for the satisfaction of my family ; I had made up my mind to come over, but I trust there is no necessity. I think it impossible for Mr. C. to betray you, or for you to betray me, after the kindness you have received from me. We are doing well ; our congregations increase, and will increase, if we can get rid of them(A). Kindest respects to Mr. and Mrs. C. your mother, &c. in which my dear Susana joins.

Your's, affectionately,

T. HILL.

" Mr. William Sissison, currier, Hull. "

MY DEAR BROTHER,

As a last effort, they have boldly come forward and accused me of being the writer of the anonymous letter. This was brought before the Leaders' Meeting on Thursday night(B), and eighteen

(A) It is well known that the congregation had very much decreased.

(B) Mr. H. does not inform Mr. S. what occasioned this meeting, and how it occurred that *the whole* of the leaders attended, which, at Shields, is a very unusual circumstance. The following is the fact of the case:—several of the Leaders, began strongly to suspect Mr. H. and there was every reason to believe that a majority would sign a requisition for a District Meeting. At this very juncture, Mr. H. perceiving the change of opinion, one Sunday evening, after preaching, and giving tickets at Blyth, made it public to the Society, that, wherever they heard he had written the vile letters against Miss B. they *must* contradict it as he had now got a clue that would lead to the author. They said that was all they wanted. Mr. H. further informed them that a letter had come from the person who had written the anonymous letters, in which the writer said, that hearing Mr. H. was blamed for writing them, he had written this to clear him. Mr. H added, that he meant to bring it forward on Tuesday evening, at the Leaders' Meeting.

out of the twenty-two Leaders, &c. who were present, declared that she was guilty of *lying* and *defamation of character*. They

The two intervening days he went from house to house throughout the leaders, except to those who he knew strongly suspected him, and stated the same as he had done on Sunday evening, repeating an extract which he said was from the letter.

And, on the Tuesday Evening, at the Leaders' Meeting, Mr. H. introduced the subject, by saying, "I hope you will all now be fully satisfied that I have not written those vile anonymous letters, as a letter has come from the person himself who wrote them." One present observed, "I hope you have brought the letter to shew the Leaders." Mr. H. very warmly replied, "The letter is not intended to come here, sir." He was then asked what post mark was upon it, and whether it had a name to it; to whom it had come, and if they might see a copy of it. To all these enquiries they could get no answer. Mr. H. then made an attempt to get Miss B. expelled the Society on the charge of lying and defamation of character, but the Leaders *did not* bring this charge against her. As soon as it was discovered that that was his design, there was a general murmur, and the enquiry *was, what had Miss B. done?* They felt much for her, at the same time that they pitied Mr. H. as he was blamed innocently. A wish was expressed by some of the Leaders to hear what Miss B. had to say, and Messrs. Beal and Wingrave, were deputed to wait upon her with a message, requesting her attendance at a meeting that would be purposely called on Thursday evening. She enquired of Messrs. Beal and Wingrave, if they believed such a letter had come as Mr. H. stated. They declared they could not but believe it—that Mr. H. had given Mr. B. an extract from it, to shew to the Society. Mr. B. declared, if he could think him guilty, he should never speak to him but once, and that would be to forbid him his house. Mr. W. said if they could not believe their minister, who could they believe. Both expressed great sympathy for Miss B. She declined attending any public meeting, where she knew every thing that she could say, had been before advanced by her friends. She, however, addressed a letter to the Leaders, when they were assembled on the Thursday evening, but which letter, like every thing that

have also signed a paper wherein they declare that they have satisfactory assurance that the anonymous letters were not written by any body in the Circuit(A). She has got several people here to espouse her cause(B), especially a Quaker of considerable respectability, who thinks that the capital *Ss* and the *Fs* are like mine, and also some of the *Rs*(C). On all this I pour contempt, knowing myself to be innocent. I have told them I will swear I am innocent in any court if compelled. Your's gave complete satisfaction to my wife, and myself, stand *firm*, and all will be well. I have given the greatest satisfaction to Mr. M'Nicol and Mr. Walmsley. They will never bring it into court. I believe but they will do

had already been stated, Mr. H. who was Chairman of the Meeting, endeavoured to set aside, as not to regarded, in opposition to his assurances. It was certainly remarkable, when Mr. H. was publicly stating in Shields and the neighbourhood, that he had received a letter from the anonymous writer, that he had not written off immediately to inform Mr. Sission.

(A) It was their depending on his word, and on the authenticity of the extracts from the letter he pretended had come from the anonymous writer that caused those who did sign—only it must be observed there were several who refused to sign, and would not be influenced to believe there was such a letter.

(B) Those friends, who espoused Miss B.'s cause, were not influenced either by her, or any other person to do so, they did it from a love of truth and justice.

(C) This gentleman dealt with Mr. B. and his sister, and was at their shop in the way of business. Mr. B. knowing his abilities, and that, from his situation as a banker, he was much employed in writing and scrutinizing hands, wished to have his opinion on the anonymous letter. His opinion was decided, (not as it respected any *particular letters*) but the whole of the letter, that it was the same hand writing, as various letters, in Mr. Bell's possession, written by Mr. H. in his usual undisguised hand.

every thing they can, and there are some wise heads and desperate spirits at work (A).

Your's, &c.

THOMAS HILL.

P. S. Be sure and let me know if any thing particular occurs.

This letter has no date, but appears to have been put into the post, September 29, 1821.

"Mr. William Sissison, currier, Hull."

North-Shields, October 2, 1821.

DEAR BROTHER,—As your old friend is determined to ruin us, (if she can) I think it proper to give you all the information I can, that you may be upon your guard (B). They say they have certain persons in Hull, who are getting all the information they want (C). This I don't believe, though it is said with great glee (D). What will you and Mr. C. think, when I assure you that she drew up that famous character which she has printed herself (E)? She wrote it on a slip of paper, and took it to Thomas

(A) No instance can be named where any thing desperate appeared, or what was contrary to a christian spirit manifested.

(B) Miss B.'s having made a proposal, which she did, through the medium of her friends, that if Mr. H. would lay before them the letters he had written against her, she would forgive him, was a proof that she did not wish to ruin any one.

(C) It was never stated that they had any person in Hull getting information; they had no correspondents in Hull.

(D) There was no glee displayed, The friends of Miss B. who wished to have the affair investigated, considered it a most awful circumstance, and nothing but grave and serious conduct attended every measure they adopted.

(E) Miss B. did not draw up the character which her brother got printed. Those friends, who had access to her at the time it was written, viz. Dr. Oxley, Mrs. Oxley, Mr. Little, and Mrs Armstrong, besides her brother and sister, saw it in Mr. Bramwell's hand-writing, and signed by him.

Hudson, her Secretary, and he copied it on a sheet of letter paper(A). She then took it, the copy, to Mr. Wawn, at South-Shields, and begged of him to re-write it, and sign it with his name; so you see she was determined to have a character, and a good one(B).

O, how ought you to praise God for deliverance! What would have become of you and your dear mother(C), if I had not done what I have?—In doing this, I have involved myself in much trouble: but, as I can make out a clear and most satisfactory case to my brethren, I shall not be blamed in the least; if they should be weak enough, and wicked enough, to bring it into court, I shall take those effectual steps in connexion with yourself, which will non-suit them(D).

(A) Miss B. neither wrote one word of it, nor took it to Thomas Hudson, he is brother to the late Mrs. Farrar, and was intimate with Miss B.'s family, he copied the certificate in *her own house*, on account of a wish expressed by those friends who saw it, to have it written in the plural, that they might sign it, with many others, who they knew would wish to do so.

(B) When Miss B. conversed with Mr. Wawn on the subject, it was intended, according to the advice of a certain Methodist Preacher to have two copies of the certificate, one for each of the Shields. When Mr. Wawn wrote it, he did not know a Methodist Preacher was blamed. Mr. B. was requested by a near friend of his not to inform him who was suspected of writing the letters.

(C) Mr. Sission's mother resided with him, which would naturally cause her to feel more deeply interested in the choice which her son made, and he being remarkable for duty and attachment to his widowed mother, Mr. H. no doubt thought, if he *pretended deep feeling* for her, it would have great weight with Mr. S.

(D) This was certainly done most effectually, and to the destruction of two innocent individuals, Miss B.'s brother became unsettled and unhappy, until he was removed by death, from a fall, and her sister gradually sunk into a low and nervous state.

Let me know whether you have had another law letter; hide nothing from me. Of their wickedness and Dr O. you can form no adequate conception. Be therefore true to your word, and you will have to praise God for ever that there was such a man in *Yorkshire*(A), (if I mistake not) as Anonymous, and such a man in Shields, as T. H. But, *remember*, you have occasioned all this

(A) He does not tell Mr. S. whom he alluded to in Yorkshire, but at Shields it was generally circulated amongst those persons who were influenced to believe Mr. H.'s statements, that the letter which had come from the anonymous writer, was from a place in Yorkshire, about a hundred miles distant from Shields, and *very significant* hints were thrown out that Mr. A. E. Farrar was the writer, and that the letter which was said to have come to clear Mr. H. was from him. Mr. Bell wrote to Mr. Farrar, acquainting him with the hints thrown out against him by those persons who had conversed with Mr. H. on the subject. In answer to which, in a letter to Mr. B. dated October 19, 1821, Mr. Farrar says, "I have never written, nor caused to be written, a single line upon the unhappy subject which has lately given you so much pain, except the letter to Mr. Sissison, in answer to his enquiries respecting the anonymous letter which he sent me for examination, and one in behalf of your sister. Deeply we have sympathized with Miss Bell, and we have certainly proved we have done so. To *you* and *Jane* any such satisfaction as this must be unnecessary, or you must consider me a hypocrite of no ordinary cast: *But, be it known to all men, that I know nothing at all of the writer of the anonymous letters, and have had no communication of any kind with Mr. Hill upon this subject, or any other.*"

A. E. FARRAR.

After this account of Mr. F.'s was made known, as it was still persisted in by Mr. Hill, that the anonymous letters were written in Yorkshire; it was then generally circulated that Mr. Sissison himself had written them.

trouble through indecision (A). Take care how you form another engagement. Wishing you every blessing,

I am, your's, affectionately,

THOMAS HILL.

"Mr. William Sissison,
currier, Hull."

Though they are using every means to destroy *Methodism* in this place, we are increasing in *numbers, income, and congregation*. The reason is this, *they are known too well to be believed*.

October 6, 1821.

DEAR SIR,—The Bells have commenced (B) proceedings against me, and several wicked people, who hate *Methodism*, have promised them money to carry on the wicked plot (C). They have three or four persons who will come forward in court and declare there is a striking similarity between some of the letters in the anony-

(A) Mr. S. was fully decided, (as is proved in page 7, by quotations from his own letters to Miss B.) up to the period he received Mr. Hill's letters.

(B) This was on his receiving the attorney's letter, which is given in page 17. It is proper to observe, that previous to that letter being sent, Mr. H. at one of the Leaders' Meetings, when attempting to exculpate himself, threatened to bring an action against Miss B. for blaming him, and declared if she was not quick in bringing her's, he would bring his action first.

(C) This is one of the most false and wicked statements that could possibly be made. Neither Miss B. nor her family, were intimate with any wicked people; their friends, in general, were Methodists, or friends to *Methodism*, neither did any individual promise them money, nor did they need money.

ymous letter, and one they have of mine(a) This their counsellor says is sufficient to bring it into court. and they intend to subpoena you and Mr. Cookman, and Mr. Gee to Newcastle upon this business (b). I have been with Mr. M'Nicol, the chairman of the district, to Durham, to consult Messrs. *Ward* and *Bramwell*, the most eminent attorneys in the north, and both are Methodists. Mr. Ward is well known, and a member of our committee of privileges. We laid the whole business before them, (viz.) the letters you wrote to me, and copies (as far as I could recollect)(c), of my *two first letters to you*. They said you acted very wrong in exposing your anonymous communications(d) after what you had received from me, and that you should never

(a) They had six persons in Shields and the neighbourhood who were ready, from a knowledge of Mr. H.'s hand-writing, to swear the anonymous letters were written by him. They could have had numbers of persons to swear that they were convinced they were written by him, had not the law required persons either to have corresponded with or seen the person write to make them witnesses, and previous to the last trial, twelve persons came forward to swear they were written by him.

(b) It was never said that Mr. Gee was to be subpoenaed.

(c) When it is recollected what Mr. H. says in his late publication, viz. "That Siasison, contrary to the opinion which I gave him in my letters, and contrary to every thing I conceive to be honourable and just, had broken off his engagements with Miss Bell." It may be supposed that his memory would not serve him *very faithfully* in giving an account of the contents of his letters to Mr. S.

(d) This opinion is so inconsistent with the character they bear, that its accuracy may be doubted; for why should they consider that Mr. S.'s conduct, in exposing such letters, as the anonymous ones was deserving of censure.

have exposed mine in any respect whatever(A) I excused for you as well as I could. It is the first time I ever interfered or gave advice in any courtship, and it shall be the last(B). Their opinion(C) is, that if they persist in a court of law, (and I believe they will) that means must be used to stop it, if possible; for although I can with the greatest ease prove that I have written nothing but the truth, and can, in Mr. M'Nicol's opinion, fully justify myself before the Conference(D), yet it is distressing beyond measure. I never was in a court of judicature in my life, and to defend myself will cost from £50. to £100. It will also kill my wife, ruin my health, and ruin this Society(E). I have therefore made up my mind, (if they proceed) to try to settle it by a developement of the whole business before arbitrators, with proper stamps, covenants, &c. They say Mr. C. advises them to proceed, saying he will be ready to appear in their behalf, when called upon, in order to show the wicked conspiracy entered into against them; and Mr. Little says Miss Bell has shown him a letter from Mr. C. to her,

(A) Mr. S. could not be said at that time, to have exposed Mr. H.'s letters. He had only shewn them to his own family, and a few of his most particular friends (in great confidence) for the purpose of having their opinion and advice; being unable, from the distracted state of his own mind, to judge what he should do.

(B) Mr. Alder, of Blyth, declared that in conversing with Mr. H. on the subject, after it was known the letters were written by him to Mr. S. that Mr. H. said he had very often given his opinion and advice on such subjects.

(C) This must mean his attorney's opinion.

(D) This is quite contrary to the opinion Mr. M'N. gave to Miss B. for he said should Mr. H. be proved to be guilty, he was quite at a loss to know what the Conference could do with him.

(E) This is very inconsistent with the postscript of the last letter, in which he says "that though they were using every means to destroy Methodism, it was continuing to increase."

to that effect (A). To this I have to observe, that no person living, (not even my wife) knew that I had written to you, or you to me, (excepting yourselves) till the latter end of August. I am in league with nobody, nor should I have written you at all, if it had not been for reasons assigned in your's and my letters: you will therefore instantly make up every scrap of my writing, and send it in a parcel properly sealed to me, *per mail*. You will also do well to send me the other anonymous, or burn it, for it is certain now, that my hand has been imitated, either to serve you, or ruin me. Mr.

(A) This is quite incorrect. Mr. Little declares he never did nor could say any such thing. It has also been widely circulated through different counties, by the supporters of Mr. Hill, that Mr. Cookman carried on a private correspondence with Miss B. It is therefore necessary, for the sake of truth, to produce the *only* letter that gentleman ever wrote to her, nor was she *privileged* with ever holding a conversation with him on the subject. The letter is as follows:—

HULL, August 15, 1821.

MISS BELL,—I duly received your second letter* yesterday morning, and cannot but deeply sympathize with you, under your present sufferings. At the same time, you must perceive, from the situation in which I am placed, if it were in my power to cast any light upon this mysterious business, that that is entirely out of the question. I have been consulted only in the character of a confidential friend. The information to which I have had access, has been private, and were I in possession of any facts that might lead to such results as you wish, and which I think it is your duty, if possible, to obtain; you must see, at once, the impropriety of my making any such disclosure. I will not, however, conceal from you what is my opinion on this subject. From the letters which have been received from the most respectable sources, your character, as a woman and a christian, appear to be, not only

* It is proper to state that when Mr. B. returned from Hull, and found his sister was sent from home, he wrote to her, and particularly requested her to write to Mr. Cookman.

McNicol is decidedly of the *latter opinion*. You cannot have any possible objection to send them to me, as it is the only way to prevent you and your friends being dragged into this *county*, and the total ruin of me and my family. If you hesitate, I must instantly come over, which will be very expensive, and as we have had sickness in the house for twelve months, I can ill bear it. I do not believe a word of what they say about Mr. C. and I believe you would suffer any thing rather than wilfully or knowingly injure me. Send me therefore the letters, and rest your defence, if

unimpeachable, but also truly excellent. And, on this ground, I think it is the duty of your friends, to find out, if possible, the author of these letters. For the charges contained in them, although of a general character, represent you as one of the worst of women*; and whoever is the author of them, if he can be identified, is called upon, by every principle of justice, humanity, and honour, either to substantiate these charges, by facts, or to be held up to the public, as a most cruel defamer.

What the effects of such letters would be upon a person placed as Mr. S. was, it is very easy to perceive†, and, I am quite sure, that had not these letters been sent, he would have honourably fulfilled those engagements, into which he had entered.

You will allow me to add, that the unfavourable impressions made on my mind, by the perusal of these letters, is nearly obliterated; and what I previously thought of you, I cannot but believe to be true; namely, that you are a woman of a very superior understanding, and of sound christian principles. Trusting that you will, by these principles, be supported under this afflictive bereavement, and that even the pen of slander shall work together for your good; allow me to subscribe myself

Your sympathizing friend,

GEORGE COOKMAN.

* It must be observed that Mr. Cookman here refers to the *anonymous* letters.

† It is only doing justice to the judgement and humane feeling of Mr. Cookman, to state, that though he naturally expressed himself thus, yet after Miss B. was proved innocent of every charge brought against her, he has been of opinion that she had a just claim to the fulfilment of Mr. S.'s engagements.

ever called upon, upon your own will (A) to break off the connexion, strengthened and influenced by general report(B). Write upon the backs of my first two, saying what part of them you read to John Bell, and what you said. You may take copies of them for your own use, if you like, though your wisest plan is not to have any copy, and to try to forget their contents. I shall keep them by me. .

Your's, &c.

THOMAS HILL.

" Mr. William Sissison,
carrier, Hull."

N. B. If I can possibly settle this wretched business without exposing our correspondence, I will, but I feel afraid I shall not be able; your letters shall be returned as soon as I am out of danger. How far have you been influenced in giving her up by your other correspondents(C)? Could you, or Mr. C. do any thing to show her the folly and wickedness of prosecuting me? Could you by hold-

(A) This defence Mr. S. could not make, because he had ever declared that he considered Miss B. as the gift of God, and, after receiving the letters, said, that up to that period, he had looked upon her as Heaven's boon.

(B) Neither was it possible Mr. S. could give this as a reason, because the general report and only report of Miss B. was so widely different from the character which would make her deserving to be deserted.

(C) Mr. S. could not be influenced at all, to desert Miss B. by other correspondents, because he had none but Mr. H.

ing out a hope that your correspondence would probably be renewed(A), or can you and Mr. C. stop them by any other means?

NORTH SHIELDS, October 13, 1821.

DEAR BROTHER,—Messrs. Ward and Bramwell think you had better keep the letters, since I can place confidence in you. Be sure and keep *every thing as close as you can*, and tell *every one* of your friends, to whom you have mentioned the matter, to do the same. Compromise, or arbitration, in the present stage of the business, is dangerous. They have nothing to found their action upon at present but the anonymous letter, and, as it is an established rule of evidence, that hand writing cannot be proved by comparing the papers in dispute, with any other papers, acknowledged to be genuine, I have nothing to fear(B).

The witness must swear positively to the hand writing, from his knowledge of the character, and this nobody can do, as the paper was never written by me(C), nor have I any knowledge of or connexion with the writer. I have been served with a writ, which I have sent to Durham, every thing proper will

(A) If Mr. H. meant by this that Mr. S. was to *be sincere* in the hope he recommends him to hold out, *he* certainly was taking one step towards endeavouring to undo the injury he had caused to be inflicted upon Miss B. only it is deserving of notice, that the words "could you, by holding out a hope, that it is probable your correspondence would be renewed," were erased by striking a pen through them, but so that it might be easily read, which no doubt was intended.

(B) The witnesses to prove the hand writing, were aware of what the law required as evidence, and their evidence was *not* confined to prove Mr. H.'s hand writing, merely from comparing it with his own letters.

(C) It was from a knowledge of the character of Mr. H.'s hand writing, that the witnesses did swear positively it was his.

be done. I am in *wise and honest hands*, and have nothing to fear, if we do not betray ourselves. Give my kind respects to Mr. Highfield, and tell him we must rest upon our arms for another month. If any thing of moment occurs, I will let you know. *Be still and firm.* If Mr. Cookman could draw up a few lines shewing the *folly, impolicy, and certain ruin* of bringing it into Court upon such a baseless foundation, it would have a *good effect*. This is the ground Mr. M'Nicol will take, if he takes any.

I am, your's, affectionately,

THOMAS HILL.

" Mr. William Sissison,
currier, Hull."

N. B. If Mr. C. writes, he must not even hint that he has heard any thing from me.

DEAR SIR,—Please let me know whether you have received any intelligence from this place since I wrote you last, and what it is—also whether you have said any thing to any body about any letters—or whether your *friends or advisers* have? Say whether you have the other anonymous, and whether you have ever said whom you thought was the *writer*(A)? I am still of opinion they were written by some *friend of your's*, or else by an *enemy to me*,

(A) The great anxiety manifested by Mr. H. respecting the anonymous letter which Mr. S. still had in his possession, cannot but be observed. In a recent letter, he wishes it to be sent to him, or to be destroyed, and, in this, and future letters, he is extremely desirous to know whether Mr. S. had given an opinion who had written them, and, above all, whether or not he would say that he had written them.

but I have no more light upon the subject than I had(A). I expect to send you a little intelligence of importance soon. In the mean time, *beware* of what *you say* or *do* to any body who speaks to you, and tell your friends to do the same.

I expect Dr. Oxley will be in Hull soon(B), be sure and mind what you say. He is your inveterate enemy, and *he is mine*(C), More about him next time. Write immediately.

Your's, affectionately,

T. HILL.

SHIELDS, Nov. 13, 1821.

"Mr. William Sissison,
currier, Hull."

(A) He pretended at Shields to have much light on the subject, as it was generally circulated, through his influence, that the writer was ready to come forward on the trial.

(B) Dr. Oxley having to go into Lincolnshire, stated, in Shields, that in passing through Hull he would see Mr. Sissison, and endeavour to get some evidence sufficient to bring Mr. H. to a District Meeting. On the Doctor's arrival at Hull, he was surprized to find that Mr. H. *had been there* three days before him, and that his stay had been amazingly short, and attended with the greatest secrecy. His business was purposely to see Mr. Sissison, whom the Dr. found was so fast bound, on account of the promises of secrecy he had made, that he could not obtain any information from him.

(C) On the contrary, Dr. Oxley was the real friend of Mr. S. He argued with those persons that were influenced to believe Mr. H. innocent, that Mr. S. did not write the anonymous letters. He also wrote a friendly letter to him, inviting him to his house, and was very desirous to have Mr. S. undeceived; neither was the Dr. the enemy of Mr. H. he had had no quarrel with him, but had striven to make peace in the affair at Blyth, between Mr. H. and that Society. He was in attendance on Mr. H.'s family, professionally, until this unpleasant business took place.

DEAR SIR,—You say in your's of this day's post, that "*if it is, suffered to go to trial either Mr. C.'s evidence, or your's, would inevitably ruin my cause.*" Now tell me, *honestly and candidly* why you think so, or rather say so, and answer the question I asked you in my last, viz. *Do you know who the anonymous writer is?* Will either of you say it was *me* or *my wife*. Answer me explicitly, by return of post.

I am, your's, respectfully,

THOMAS HILL.

NORTH SHIELDS, Nov. 17, 1821.

"Mr. William Sissison,
currier, Hull."

DEAR SIR,—The information conveyed by your's of to-day, is perfectly satisfactory. All I wanted to know was whether you or Mr. C. had dropped any thing which *some agent* of their's had got hold of. Whether they will bring it into Court or not, I cannot tell, but I am *morally certain* they will not, if you, and Mr. C. keep my letters, and their contents to yourselves, be sure therefore, and be *honest*, and inflexibly *firm*. The letters I have written to you must be laid before my solicitors and an able counsel, if I receive a *declaration in trial*, and Mr. Ward's opinion is, that they are *not actionable*, nor would be if they contained *ten times worse* matter than they do. I would give any thing I could to find out the anonymous writer. My wife received a letter this morning, purporting to come from *him(or her)* saying, if I cannot non-suit them, on the onset of the trial, that he will come forward and de-

clare himself the writer(A). The only ground of action which they have against me is the *anonymous*, and a Mr. Roddam, in this place, who was nine years in the post office of North Shields and Newcastle, after an hour's examination, and with Jane's assistance, declares it is not mine(B), and I will swear positively that I never saw it, and that I have not the most distant knowledge

(A) Mr. H. at various times, previous to this, had published that different letters had come from the anonymous writer, and pretended to give extracts from some of them, but would not let the *real* letters be seen. Mr. Garbutt, of Hull, being at Shields, and having an opportunity of comparing the anonymous letter with Mr. Hill's usual writing, was decided, in his opinion, that it was written by Mr. H. Mr. Garbutt called upon Mrs. H. and Mr. H. not knowing that he had seen the anonymous letter, began the subject, and shewed Mr. Garbutt the letter, *he pretended*, had come from the writer, Mr. Garbutt immediately discovered that it was the same hand writing as the anonymous letter he had examined, and convinced himself it was Mr. Hill's hand writing.

(B) Mr. Thomas Roddam only looked at the anonymous letter a *very few* minutes, (being called away). On Mr. Hill's bearing that Mr. R. had said the anonymous letters did not look like his writing, except some of the letters, he went to him, and requested him to sign a paper to that effect. Mr. R. declared that he objected to sign the paper, and *very properly* observed that he could not set up his opinion in opposition to the Banker, whose opinion was so very superior to his, and declared he could not swear it was not Mr. H.'s writing. Mr. H. assured him that the Banker had changed his opinion, and positively insisted upon it that there would be no law suit, but that if he would sign the certificate, he would get others to sign it, and it would be of great service to him at the Conference; after much persuasion, (by Mr. Roddam's account) he signed it, but admitted that he discovered a similarity in the Rs and the Ss. When the Banker heard that Mr. H. had told Mr. Roddam he had changed his mind respecting the writing, he stated, that when Mr. Hill, heard what opinion he had given respecting the anonymous letter he wrote to him, and that his letter had more than ever confirmed him in his opinion.

of it. I shall esteem it a great favour if you will critically and thoroughly examine the anonymous you have, and compare it *letter for letter* with mine, and tell me what similarity you discover between them, say also what paper it is written on, and what the watermark is. If you and Mr. C. are brought into Court you will have but little to say, as the *four first letters* will be produced, or their contents, and there are no secrets between us; but if they get nothing more from you and Mr. C. I am satisfied they will not bring it into Court, and, if they do they will be non-suited. As soon as things are settled, I shall give you and Mr. that information about them which will fill you with astonishment.

She says that she has a copy of *the letter*, or of *a letter I sent you*, and several believe, from what she says, that Mr. C. is her warm friend, and *urges her to go on*, but all this I treat with contempt(A). I am providentially put in the hands of wise and honest solicitors and I will not go into court without I am sure of gaining a complete victory.

Your's respectfully,

THOMAS HILL.

This letter has no date.

" Mr. William Sissison,
currier Hull."

DEAR SIR,— The notice for trial is countermanded(B), *but it is not over*—no, I expect them to begin with you immediately, but

(A) Miss B. never said that she had either a letter, or the copy of a letter, neither did she ever say that Mr. C. was her warm friend, and urged her to go on.

(B) Miss B. and her friends still desirous to have the business settled, without going into Court, determined to defer it until the next Assizes, hoping they might get evidence to obtain a District Meeting.

if you act that manly and christian part to which you have so often pledged yourself, in your letters to me, their wickedness must come upon their own heads. They mean to prosecute you for breach of promise, and defaming her character^(A), and any lawyer will inform you, that exposing your correspondents cannot help in either case. Therefore as you are a single man, and as you must clearly see the malignity of my prosecutors, and your's, rather die, than give any advantage over me or you, or any of your friends. They are Selling Off, Prime Cost, under Prime Cost, and by Lottery. Drop me a line when you get the writ, and then tell me plainly how you mean to act. To fully understand each other will be of advantage to each,

Do not shew the printed paper to any of the preachers, except Mr. Highfield^(B). We wish to remain close for the present. You may shew it to any friend, but don't part with it.

Your's, truly,

T. HILL.

NORTH SHIELDS, Feb. 26, 1822.

"Mr. William Sissison,
currier, Hull."

(A) It was never the intention of Miss B. to prosecute Mr. S. although he was threatened with an action by her brother.

(B) This was the paper signed by Thomas Roddam, stating he did not think Mr. H. wrote the anonymous letter, but that he discerned a similiarity in different letters. Many other members in the Methodist Society, in distant parts of the Circuit, as well as Shields, were influenced by Mr. H. to sign it—who it must be observed had never seen the letter, three of the individuals who signed it, had expressed a very different opinion, but were persuaded out of their judgment by Mr. H.'s assurances.

DEAR SIR,—Several meetings have been held within the last fortnight by your prosecutors. From all I can learn they are at a loss how to act. If they could prevail upon you to give up the papers, as their phrase is, they should do well, but they begin to despair of this(A). I have seen Mr. Bramwell, of Durham, and Mr. Cookson, one of the counsellors detained. They are

It is worthy of remark, that this paper which Mr. H. got printed, one of which he sent to Mr. S. was to be kept from the Press, except Mr. Highfield, whom he had influenced in his favour, but, who, like many others, knew nothing of the real merits of the case. It must also be observed, that the same secrecy attended this paper at Shields, where it was printed; the printer was bound, that not one of them was to be seen in Shields, and none printed but what were to be given to Mr. H. himself. The reason for this secrecy was, that Mr. H. persuaded two persons in the Society to sign an additional certificate attached to it, (respecting the hand-writing) stating that they believed the prosecution against Mr. H. to be malicious and unjust, and that he was every where well received and respected, and, further, that they signed this document in behalf of the circuit. Whereas, the fact is, the subject was never in any way brought before the circuit, on the contrary, various leading individuals upon the spot, declare that it must have been done in the most clandestine manner. It is said they signed it on condition that it was not printed, be that as it may, certain it is, that these certificates were sent to London, Preston, Bolton in Lancashire, and many other places; but, in Shields, where it would have been known to be false, it never appeared, and it was many months before the friends of Miss Bell saw one of them, and it came from a great distance.

(A) There never was any meeting held by Miss B.'s friends on the subject. They certainly frequently conversed on what would be the best measures to adopt, and their anxiety that Mr. S. should give up the letters, arose from a desire to have a settlement of the business without going forward with the legal process. Mr. Little, previous to the date of this letter, had written to Mr. Cookman and Mr. Sissison, as a last effort for getting it settled out of court, but, it was evident, on account of the promises of secrecy, nothing would be revealed by them.

much pleased at your firmness, and they advise me to compel them to try it at the next assizes, or give it up. If I do not, they can, for about four or five pounds, put it off till another assize, and by these means weaken our evidence and strengthen their own. If I rule them, I believe they will drop proceedings against us. But, if they do not, then my safety, and I believe your own, will very much depend upon the defence you make. If you keep *all written information out of sight*, and *especially the anonymous*, and bring Messrs. Moss, Beall, Bramwell, Laws, Owen, Wingrave, Smith, Nevil, Talbot, Metcalf, Jones, and many other respectable persons forward by subpoena. I can point out *they* information they can give, which is all, and more than all, that my letters contain(Δ).

(Δ) This was certainly base advice.—*The anonymous letters and all the information from himself that had caused Mr. S.'s conduct to Miss B. were to be kept out of sight*, under a pretence that if a number of persons were subpoenaed by Mr. S. they would give the same vile information which he had done. Could that have been the case, why did not Mr. H. subpoena those persons himself? out of the *ten* he mentions there were only four of them subpoenaed by him, and that was respecting the hand-writing. It will be observed that *five* of those persons he names, namely, Beall, Bramwell, Owen, Wingrave and Smith had signed the certificate of Miss B.'s character and Laws had declared himself willing to do any thing, but was from home when the certificate was signed. It has also been proved in the foregoing pages, where Mr. H. makes use of some of these names, that the account he gave, quite disagreed with what they had said on the subject. It is true, these persons were influenced by Mr. H. to believe him innocent, and very much blamed Miss B. and her friends for injuring Methodism, which they thought would be the effect of their accusing Mr. H. Why he named the other three, (leaving Mr. Moss for the present) namely Talbot, Metcalf, and Jones, is unaccountable. Mrs. Talbot is a relative of Miss B. and had ever given proof of having a sisterly affection for her; she attended the trial at York to prove the high estimation Miss B. had ever been held in by her, and that no being had ever heard her say one word to the

It is true, *some* of the above would feel reluctant to say all they can, but all I have written, and *more* could be proved by Mr. Moss, &c(A). Mr. Robert Pilster, who was in the circuit three

contrary. There are various persons in Shields of the names of *Metcalf* and *Jones*, but which of them are meant, or on what account they are named, no idea can be formed. Miss B. had no intercourse with persons of either name, except some *most respectable* persons who were her customers, and she had *every proof* of having *their* good opinion. In making out this list of names, he was certainly at a loss, (though he pretends *many* others could be brought) or why write part of Mr. Nevison's name, and then stop and run his pen through it. He knew Mr. Nevison had discernment to see through the whole of the affair, and would not be prejudiced against Miss B. nor her friends for blaming Mr. H. but told him to his face in a Leaders' meeting on the occasion, that he believed him to be the guilty man. In asserting that those persons he names could prove all that he has written, he certainly does well to qualify it by saying that *some* of them would feel reluctant.

(A) It is truly absurd as well as wicked to pretend that Mr. Moss could *fully prove* what he had written. It was not in the power of Mr. Moss, by his own account (as will by and bye be seen) to prove any thing against Miss B. Mr. Moss, as well as Mr. H. had been on the most friendly terms with Miss B. and her family from the time he came into the circuit the August proceeding, Nor was there the *least change* until Mr. Bell incurred the displeasure of Mr. Hill, when Mr. Moss took part with Mr. Hill, and was consequently opposed to those who differed from him in opinion. Although neither Miss B. nor any of her family, ever had a word of difference with Mr. Moss, yet it was evident his behaviour towards them was altered when Mr. H. his superintendent, took such enmity against Mr. Bell.

years before I came to it(a), and Mr. Robert Jackson, who was two years, can confirm every thing relative to what I have written(s). They have nobody to countenance them except Oxley's, Little, and Nevison(c). Tinley's bill is upwards of a £100(D).

It is impossible now to know exactly what is best to be done, but when you receive the declaration, the way will be clearly

(A) Neither could Mr. Pilter prove any thing against Miss Bell—he lived on the most friendly terms with Miss B.'s family, and although their intercourse was, at one time, a little interrupted, owing to a difference of opinion between him and Mr. Bell, it was afterwards renewed and continued until he left the circuit, when he parted with them in the most affectionate manner.

(B) Mr. Robert Jackson was Mr. Pilter's colleague, and with him and his wife, Miss B. was on the most friendly terms, and, in many instances, they proved their good opinion of her. If Mr. Hill thinks that Mr. Robert Jackson is amongst the number of those preachers whom he has deceived, he is mistaken—since this unpleasant business took place, Mr. Robert Jackson, amongst many other preachers, has not been unmindful of making kind enquiries respecting Miss B. and expressing his feeling for her.

(C) In a former letter it will be remembered he said, "several wicked people who hate Methodism, have come forward and promised them money, &c." The only three who he now says they have to countenance them, were but a part of those that were leading members in the Society, who, by that time, were convinced of Mr. H.'s guilt, viz. Messrs. Potter, Cook, Matthews, Smart, Young, besides several others, who, though they did not so publicly own their opinion, yet evidently shewed they had lost their confidence in Mr. H.'s assurances.

(D) Mr. Tinley felt most indignant at this being stated, as he declares he never, to any individual, named such a thing. There were several under-hand applications made to him from Mr. H.'s friends to know how things were going on, but Mr. Tinley needed not to be instructed how to treat them.

marked out. If we are forced into court, it will perhaps be expedient to have the same counsellor, but this and every thing else, must be kept very close. They are going to bring their things to the hammer.

Relying upon your integrity and union for the adoption of those plans, which will defeat their malignity, and save us from ruin.

I am,

Your's, affectionately,

THOMAS HILL.

NORTH-SHIELDS, May 6, 1822.

" Mr. William Sissison,
currier, Hull."

N. B. John Bell pretends to possess some secret intelligence, and it has been hinted that a secret correspondence has been carried on between Mrs. Cookman and Mrs. Oxley, and that Mrs. Oxley has directed her letters for Mrs. Cookman, to Mrs. Chaplin's, Story-Street^(A), but I hope there is nothing in it. You had better make some enquiry. If any thing has transpired of importance, let me know.

(A) It is entirely false, Mr. Bell never pretended to possess any secret intelligence. No secret correspondence was ever hinted as being carried on between Mrs. Oxley and Mrs. Cookman. Mrs. Oxley never wrote a letter on the subject. A letter which Mrs. Cookman wrote to Mrs. Oxley was *no secret*, it was to suggest that it would be better to have the business settled by arbitration, than to go to law. Mrs. Cookman did not, at that time, know that the proposal *had repeatedly* been made, and Mr. H. continued to insist he had nothing to arbitrate about, as he had done Miss B. no harm, and had written no ill of her in letters to Hull.

Continuation of the Trial.

Dr. Orley proved, that the word torn from the letter was "instantly" and also that nobody else but himself could have been meant by Dr. O—l—y in the first of the anonymous letters.

William Sissison examined by Mr. Scarlett.—I reside at Hull, I am a currier, and have been some time settled there. Some time ago I became acquainted with Miss Bell, at Hull. I was engaged to marry her in June or July, 1821. In the month of June, I received these two anonymous letters. I understood them to allude to Miss Bell, and my connexion with her. At that time I knew Mr. Hill by sight, I had no intimacy with him. I knew his wife. I had known her from my childhood. I knew that Mr. Hill was the preacher at Shields. After receiving those letters I made a communication to Mrs. Hill. The letters read to-day I received from Mr. Hill. I did not know his hand-writing at that time. I had no idea from whom the anonymous letters came when I received them. In consequence of the receipt of them, and of Mr. Hill's letters, I broke off the marriage with Miss Bell. I wrote decisively to her on that point on the 2nd of July. I received other letters from Mr. Hill after that time. I did not send one of the anonymous letters by post to North Shields; but the late Mr. John Bell having come over to Hull on the subject I gave it to him. The other I sent to York. I attended as a witness at the last trial. I gave up these letters to Miss Bell in October last, and not before the last trial. From the comparison of the anonymous letters with those written to me by Mr. Hill, I certainly believe the anonymous letters to be in his hand writing. I gave up the letters voluntarily, and because I thought it to be my duty to do so.

Cross-examined by Mr. Pollock.—I had many letters from Mr. Hill in 1821. I had upwards of twenty letters from him before the trial in 1822. I was examined at Newcastle three years ago. I have received letters from Mr. Hill since that time—between three and half a dozen. I said on the former trial, that I could not swear the anonymous letters were in Mr. Hill's hand writing.

I think I was asked a question on that point at the last assizes, but I am not sure. I had a strong suspicion at that time that Mr. Hill had written the letters. I had not given up any of the acknowledged correspondence of Mr. Hill before October, 1824. On the former trial, in answer to a question from the judge whether I should have broken off the marriage, had there been nothing but the anonymous letters, I said that I thought not. I was then cross-examined by Mr. Scarlett, and I stated, that my determination to break it off had been caused in part by the subsequent conduct of Miss Bell^(A). The subsequent conduct took place after the 2nd of July. I do not recollect whether I stated that I had received letters from Miss Bell, which confirmed me in that resolution. I know a person of the name of Harley. I desired him to make enquiries, either about Miss B. or her family. I saw him on the subject in July, after I got Mr. Hill's letters. I cannot say, when my suspicion amounted to conviction, that Mr. Hill had written the anonymous letters. My mind was fully made up some weeks after the trial, when I was present at an examination of the letters. I am not now married to Miss Bell.

Re-examined.—No part of Miss Bell's conduct, previous to the 2nd of July, induced me to break off the marriage. The subsequent conduct, to which I alluded, was from my being threatened with an action. I do not know whether for breach of promise, or for defamation of character, as I never was served with a declaration. I had been often pressed to give up Mr. Hill's letters before the last trial, but I constantly refused. I gave them up in October last, because I felt it to be my duty to do so.

Mr. Pollock commenced his address to the jury, by commenting upon the extraordinary circumstance of the plaintiff's counsel upon this occasion being the very two gentlemen who had been counsel

(A) The inadvertency of Mr. Sissison making this expression, is explained in his own letter to Mrs. Armstrong, in page 20.

against her when this case was formerly tried in Northumberland. He begged them to reflect that it was in Northumberland that all the inquiries into Miss Bell's character had been made, and that the cause would have been better tried there than in Yorkshire, because the parties of it, as also the rules of the Society to which they belonged, and which had that day been brought under their notice as forming the most material features of the case, would have been better known to a jury of Northumberland than they possibly could be to a jury in Yorkshire. But the plaintiff having tried her case, and lost it in a place where she was known, and the rules of the Methodists understood, now thought it advisable to try it where she was unknown, and where the rules of her religious friends were by no means understood(A). His learned friend

(A) The reflections cast upon Miss Bell by the learned counsellor in his *very ingenious speech*, could only be occasioned by the instructions of Mr. H.

Although the enquiries respecting Miss B. were made of Mr. H. when he was in the county of Northumberland, yet the mass of evidence being in Hull, in Yorkshire, it was considered more proper to be tried at York, otherwise it was *quite contrary* to the wish of Miss B. from a consciousness of the rectitude of her conduct and character. She *particularly wished* it to be tried where she was known, and by a jury of her own countrymen. She knew the interest that had been excited in her own county at the time of the non-suit.

The following paragraph, copied from the Tyne Mercury of July 26, 1825, proves the feeling of the inhabitants at the time of the last trial in Miss B.'s own town: A correspondent says—*"Nothing could exceed the general satisfaction of all classes at North Shields, on Friday last, on the arrival of the news that Miss Bell had obtained a verdict against the Rev. Mr. Hill, of the methodist connexion, for defamation of character, being well convinced that she was vilified without cause."*

If, understanding the rules of the Methodists, have any thing to do in the case, certainly it must have been very much to the advantage of Mr. H. to be tried in Yorkshire, as Methodism is considered to prosper as much, or more, in that county than any other.

appeared to think that the cause of religion would suffer greatly, if they did not mark by their verdict of that day, their deep indignation at the practice of the Methodists.—He hardly knew what his friend meant by that remark; but if he meant to say that it was the practice of the Methodists to calumniate anonymously their private enemies, he begged leave distinctly to deny it. He thought it necessary that the jury, in considering this case, should take into consideration the peculiar habits of the Methodists, and should reflect upon the interference which their ministers were enjoined, by their religious tenets, to exercise in all the concerns of the flock committed to their care. That would be of great aid to them in deciding whether the language in which the defendant had written to Mr. Sissison, regarding Miss Bell, was a malicious interference on his part in that which he had nothing to do, or whether it was not such language as he felt himself obliged to use in fulfilling his duty as a Christian pastor. It was true that there was in it a mixture of scriptural expressions, which, in his opinion, might have been better avoided; but the jury ought to recollect that such expressions were in daily use among the Methodists; and that if they had too much of religion, those who condemned them had frequently but too little of its substance. These were general remarks, which he conceived it requisite to make in consequence of the observations of his learned friend. He would now enter more particularly into the consideration of the case itself. The question for their determination was this—Is the defendant the author of the two anonymous letters? Has he directly or indirectly, any thing to do with those two letters which would be submitted to their perusal, along with many letters which he unquestionably did write? If it should be their opinion that he was the author of them, then it mattered little as to what he had to urge in point of law on the other letters, being confidential communications made to Mr. Sissison, at his express solicitation and request; and the only further question which they would have to decide would be as to the amount of damages they would give to the plaintiff. But if it should be their opinion that the defendant had neither act nor part in the concoction of the anonymous letters,

then it would be for them to consider whether the other letters did not contain his honest and conscientious opinion, given at the express desire of Mr. Sissison, upon one of the most solemn and important affairs which could possibly happen to any man; and if they thought it was an honest and conscientious opinion, even though it was a mistaken one, the letters were justifiable, and the defendant would be entitled to their verdict in point of law. The learned counsel then proceeded at considerable length to contend, that there was no proof that the anonymous letters were written by Mr. Hill; but, supposing that they were, what ought to be the amount of damages awarded to the plaintiff? That her finances were not in a very flourishing condition, appeared from two circumstances—first, she had been in partnership with her brother in a china warehouse; and, secondly, a subscription had been raised for her maintainance after the termination of the last trial^(A). What the circumstances of Mr. Sissison were, did not appear; he might be, and no doubt he was, a very respectable man in his situation of life; but there was no evidence that he was an opulent man. That reflection alone ought to convince them that this was not a case demanding large damages; but there was another reflection, which he hoped would lead them to the same conclusion. It appeared, that after the last trial, Miss Bell had published a pamphlet against Mr. Hill, which, by her activity, had obtained a very wide circulation. It would be improper in him to comment upon the circumstances of its having been transmitted to the learned judge then on the bench; but he trusted that that circumstance would not prevent his lordship, in his over anxiety, to deal out impartial justice to both parties: from noticing the gross

(A) Miss B. being in partnership with her brother, was no proof of her not being in comfortable circumstances. A few friends did wish to raise a subscription for Miss B. to remunerate her for the heavy expenses incurred, but it was not carried into effect; her brother disapproved of it, and chose to provide for her himself, which he did while he lived.

impropriety of which the plaintiff had been guilty in sending it so industriously about to other persons(A).

Mr. Justice Bailey —I believe the pamphlet was sent to me for the purpose of obtaining a contribution, and with no improper motive(B).

Mr. Pollock continued.—The jury would judge of the effects which such a pamphlet, circulated so industriously, was calculated to produce among the friends of the defendant. If they had any doubt as to the *virulence* of that pamphlet, which he confessed that *he had not read*, that doubt would be removed by recollecting that one of the witnesses, who conceived himself to have ground of complaint against the defendant, condemned it as severe(C); there was much indelicacy in Miss Bell's diligence in circulating her pamphlet, but that indelicacy was insignificant in the extreme, when compared with her indelicacy in instructing her cause on the present occasion, to the very same counsel who had conducted the cause against her. His learned friend had told them, that he felt disgust and shame at witnessing such practices as had been carried on by the defendant. He repeated the words of his learned friend, he felt disgust and shame at witnessing the

(A) Had the learned counsellor been correctly informed on this subject, he could not have charged Miss B. with *impropriety* in circulating the pamphlet, as it was only circulated in a regular way through the booksellers, except in a very few instances when it was particularly requested to send it.

(B) It has already been stated, Miss B. had nothing to do with sending a pamphlet to the Judge. A friend, it appears, who felt for her, had sent it.

(C) It has been accounted for how the witness, here alluded to, namely, Mr. Little had not an opportunity of explaining himself on the trial, otherwise it would have appeared *he did not condemn the pamphlet* as being severe. He was only afraid if the *severe* expression made against him by Mr. Hill was inserted, it might cause him to do what he said would be no crime, namely, to blow out Mr. Little's brains.

practices of the plaintiff^(A). He felt disgust, because she had selected those for advisers in this trial who had been her opponents in the last: he felt shame, because there was a rule of the profession, (for if there had not been such a rule, his two learned friends would never have accepted briefs in her behalf,) which compelled them to become as it were accomplices in her disgrace. He felt shame at this occurrence. He felt disgust at the plaintiff, and shame, bitter shame, for himself and the profession.

Mr. Scarlett.—"I feel no shame at it, nor do I participate in any disgrace. I cannot allow an insinuation to pass unnoticed which is dishonourable to the whole profession."

Mr. Pollock continued to express his disapprobation of the rule in question, when

Mr. Scarlett again interrupted him to observe that he felt no shame at it. He likewise added, that, so far from having received any information on the cause, from having been formerly engaged in it, he had forgotten every fact connected with it, till he came to the circumstances under which the plaintiff had been formerly non-suited.

Mr. Pollock never meant to insinuate that his learned friends had betrayed any of the confidence which had been placed in them. He would admit that his learned friend knew nothing of the defendant's case, as he had given them his word for it. He did not mention the fact with any view of imputing blame to his learned friends, but for the purpose of asking the jury from what motive, but a bad and dishonest motive, could such a measure have been adopted by the plaintiff. That fact ought never to be absent from

(A) It is proper to state that Miss B. was influenced to select Mr. Scarlett and Mr. Brougham, as her counsellors, by the express wish of her friends, and particularly that of some of the most important witnesses, and that the selection was not dishonourable, is proved by the learned Judge's opinion, as hereafter given.

their consideration for a single moment whilst they were considering the amount of damages. He trusted, however, that they would not think of giving a verdict for the plaintiff. It was impossible that the anonymous letters could have been written by him. If they had been written by him, could not better evidence have been produced of it than the printer, the doctor, the grocer, and others who had been examined on the part of the plaintiff? He called their particular attention to the whole mass of letters. If they were of opinion that the anonymous letters were written by the defendant, he trusted they would say so by their verdict; but he thought that if they compared the mass of acknowledged letters with the two anonymous letters, they would be convinced with him, that whoever had written those two letters, at least it was not Mr. Hill. The two anonymous letters had a distinct character of their own; they were not written in a cramped or disguised hand; but were evidently in the free and habitual character of some individual, and that individual, not Mr. Hill^(A). The other letters had been called in as subsidiary evidence, to prove that Mr. Hill was the author of the anonymous letters. His learned friend had told them that the anonymous letters told Mr. Sissison to ask the Methodist preachers about Miss Bell, in the hope that it would induce that individual to make a reference to Mr. Hill who wrote them, and to enable him to have some mode of gratifying his revenge against her family. Now it ought not to be forgotten, that Mr. Hill was not a local preacher or resident minister at North Shields, but one of those persons who were sure to be removed at the end of three years, and who might be removed at the end of one year. He had, therefore, no local feelings to warp his judgment—no temporary resentments to gratify. Besides it was very singular, that if Mr. Hill were the author of the anonymous letters, he should, within a short period of writing them,

(A) It appears the learned counsel had afterwards got more properly informed on the subject, as in a conversation soon after with a respectable professional gentleman of the law at Newcastle in Northumberland, he expressed a very different opinion.

have commenced a long correspondence with Mr. Sissison on the same subject, without the slightest caution and reserve (A). The improbability was so outrageous, as to destroy all the arguments which his learned friend had built upon it. Indeed the whole mass of acknowledged letters were written from first to last by a person who disavowed all connexion with the anonymous letters. In the acknowledged letters, Mr. Hill stated of Miss Bell that which he believed to be his duty to state, in consequence of the long acquaintance which Mrs. Hill had had with Mr. Sissison's father. But were those letters the only cause of Mr. Sissison's breaking off the marriage? Did he not write to Mr. Farrar, at York, and desire him to institute inquiries as to Miss Bell's character? The jury had not heard what the result of those inquiries had been (B), neither had they heard the result of

(A) That Mr. Hill *presumed* to carry on a long correspondence with Mr. Sissison against Miss B. *without any reserve*, is a fact, but a reference to his letters will prove whether the secrecy he impresses upon Mr. S. may not be considered as using *caution*. It must also be observed, that, in his own publication on the subject, he says he *did not* continue his long correspondence with Mr. Sissison, "with the view of injuring Miss Bell:" but, to prevent him, if possible, from giving up the letters which he had already written to him against her.

(B) Mr. Sissison *did not* request Mr. Farrar to *institute an enquiry respecting Miss Bell's character*, but, on the receipt of the second anonymous letter he sent it to Mr. Farrar to know whether he could give him any idea who the writer could be. Mr. Farrar returned the following reply:

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I have not the least idea to what the extraordinary letter you forwarded, refers, nor who can be its author, but it is calculated to produce very painful impressions; and you can neither do yourself nor Miss Bell justice, without making the inquiries directed. By all means consult Mr. Hill*. Dr. Oxley, I know to be intimate at Miss B.'s, this may be the reason why he is excepted.

* Mr. Farrar took notice of the Methodist Preachers in Shic'ds being referred to in the anonymous letter sent to him, and knowing Mr. Hill was Superintendent Preacher there, supposed Mr. Sissison would do right in consulting him.

the inquiries which Mr. Harley had been instructed to make (A). Might not those inquiries have led to the breaking off of Miss Bell's marriage, as well as those letters of Mr. Hill? If the charges in the letter

I have lately been down at Newcastle, and, in passing through Shields, my wife and I spent the night at Miss Bell's, but neither saw nor heard any thing improper.

Your's, very affectionately,

A. E. FARRAR.

YORK, June 18, 1821.

" Mr. William Sissison,
carrier, Hull."

Shortly after, by the advice of the late Dr. Taft (to whom Miss B. applied for advice) she returned home by way of York, to see Mr. Farrar, as it was likely he might have had some communication on the subject. While she was there, Mr. Farrar wrote Mr. Sissison the following letter :

MY DEAR FRIEND,—To our utter surprise, on Thursday evening, in came Miss Bell, pretty nearly in a state of distraction, since which, she has done little except weep, and in what this business will result, I dare scarcely conjecture.

Is your mind made up?—That the insinuations in the anonymous letters are false, I durst stake my interest—but should you not investigate them? If you find them true, then there will be grounds of procedure more satisfactory to yourself. Do, my dear friend, review the matter. Perhaps this malignant design may knit you more closely together.

I had no idea till I saw Jane, that your union was so near consummation. This has certainly induced me to think you should have good grounds of procedure in setting it aside—and, as a man and a christian, hope you will not permit your mind to be alienated without satisfactory reason.

originated in malice, and in nothing else, he ought to have married the lady as soon as he discovered them to be unfounded, but he had done no such thing. An attempt had been made to shew that the defendant had conveyed away his property with the intention of preventing the plaintiff from recovering any thing by her verdict; but there was a deficiency of proof, not only as to the conveyance, but also as to the existence of any property in Mr. Hill. The learned

I feel extremely sorry that suspicion of *under* information conveyed to you, attaches to Mr. Hill, who is likely to come into some trouble; he should have said nothing which he is not ready to substantiate. If the person, be he who he may, will not do it; he has deceived you, and the opinions of Messrs. Wawn, Beal, &c. &c. not to say my own, certainly deserve more credit.

Do review the matter, and if you think proper, I shall be glad to hear from you, but as I shall be from home the whole of next week, could you let it be by return of post? I write in real friendship to both parties; both of whom I fear are greatly injured in this horrid business.

In haste,

Your's, affectionately,

A. E. FARRAR.

YORK, August 11, 1821.

"Mr. William Sisson,
currier, Hull."

To which letter Mr. S. replied, stating, that independent of the anonymous letters, he had got information in letters, which, on account of promises of secrecy, he could not give up, and which in his leader, Mr. Locking's opinion, and Mr. Cookman's, as well as all his near relatives, justified his conduct in deserting Miss Bell.

(A) The result of the enquiries, made by Mr. Harley did not tend to the breaking off of Miss Bell's marriage, as will hereafter be seen.

counsel then took a review of all the evidence in the case, and contended, first of all, that their damages could not be too small if they determined to find a verdict for the plaintiff; and, next that there was such a difference in the character of the letters, in the anonymous, and in the genuine epistles of Mr. Hill as ought to induce them to believe that the anonymous letters were not written by the defendant, and therefore that he was entitled to their verdict. They should recollect that he had been called upon as a pastor to say whether in his opinion Miss Bell would make a good wife. He (Mr. Pollock) said that the defendant gave his opinion upon that question fairly and honestly, and, if he did so, then he was entitled to make the observations which he had done, as the jury would presently hear from the lips of his Lordship. He conjured them not to let any religious feeling or sectarian hostility influence their decision of that day. Let the jury recollect, that, if the Methodists, in many points were erring still they were in all sincere. Let the jury recollect, that if they went too far, where we did not go far enough, they were still entitled to a fair discussion of their conduct and character. Let them not allow their detestation of the crime of which the defendant stood accused to form an ingredient in their judgment on the charges. Let not the horror they felt at the writer of an anonymous libel, lead them to suppose that the defendant was guilty of such a crime, unless the evidence satisfied them that he was so. If they had any doubt on the subject, let them give the benefit of it to the defendant. As a question of damages, the present question was nothing, for Miss Bell was entitled to none; but, as a question of character, it was a question of life and death to the defendant, since his character would be utterly ruined, if a verdict should chance to be recorded against him.

Mr. Justice Bayley said, that before he entered into a consideration of the circumstances of the case, he would beg leave to say a word or two on the subject of the professional rule, on which some powerful observations had been made by Mr. Pollock in alluding to the conduct of the plaintiff in selecting those counsel to conduct her cause upon this occasion, who had conducted the case against her upon the last.

The rule of the profession—whether it was wise or not, he would not pretend at present to discuss, though he was inclined to think it a wise one—the rule of the profession was, that every person had a right to compel a counsel to take his brief, unless he was previously retained by the other side. The plaintiff, in this cause, therefore, had a right to ask Mr. Scarlett and Mr. Brougham to act on her behalf.—The exercise of that right was not unwise on her part, as she had been deprived of the eminent talent which had formerly been employed in her behalf, by the elevation of Mr. Sergeant Hullock to the bench, who was now employed in trying criminals at the Crown end of the court. She was therefore obliged to look for other counsel, and in looking for them she selected, or perhaps her attorney selected without her knowing any thing about it, the two learned gentlemen who had exerted themselves for her. A man did not pass his life in courts of justice, without observing that particular counsel were generally selected for particular cases, and that suitors were, upon all occasions, anxious to intrust their causes to the greatest talent that could be had. It might be from a motive of this kind, that it happened that Mr. Scarlett and Mr. Brougham had been selected to conduct this case, as the two counsel of the most eminent talent on the circuit. The jury might rely on it, that neither of the eminent counsel, whose names he had mentioned, could be influenced by any information which they had received in the course of the former cause. Indeed, from the nature of this cause, the brief in the last cause could not give them any information which could be of use to them in the present cause: for the former brief would not contain an admission, but a denial of the defendant, being the author of the anonymous letters. The only information, therefore, which the former brief would contain, would be comments on the evidence expected to be given by the different witnesses. Having said so much upon that question, he would now beg leave to say a word or two on the observations which had been made as to the plaintiff's not trying this cause in Northumberland, as it appeared that both she and the defendant had lived at North-Shields. The cause was once tried in Northumberland; and, after the trial, which went off in a non-suit, the plaintiff was unfortunately

advised to publish a pamphlet on the subject which was extensively circulated in the county in which she lived (A). After such publication it would no longer have been proper to try it in that county. They had heard that the pamphlet had been communicated to him. He hoped its reaching him would not be considered as having any influence, or that it was sent for any other purpose than that of procuring a contribution. He had named the circumstance, because it was improper that accounts of cases which might have to come before the judges officially, should be communicated to them in private. Having made these observations, he should advert to the particular circumstances of the case. The first question was whether the two anonymous letters were in the defendant's hand-writing. There were four anonymous letters (B); the third and fourth were partly different from the first and second. They were written between the 12th of June and the 21st of July, 1821. These letters will be privileged, unless they are proved to be false and malicious. They are entitled to the privilege of being considered merely confidential communications, unless they were originally begun by the contrivance of the defendant in originating the enquiry after which they were written. For, a man about to marry, may apply for information, and if the communication made in return, be given, bona fide, it is privileged, though it be unfounded, unless it appear to have been maliciously given, and is known to the party to be untrue. If, therefore, the third and fourth letters were written in answer to Sissison's application, made without any previous contrivance on the part of the defendant, they are entitled to that privilege, but if the defendant wrote the anonymous letters, those letters take away the privilege from the third and fourth letters. It remained, therefore, to enquire whether those letters were or were not the defendant's, that they were not similar, in all respects, to the defendant's hand-writing, appeared to be true, but, they at the same time, appeared to be disguised; and, if a man's motives induced him to withhold his name, the same motives

(A) The real cause of the pamphlet's being published was to induce the Methodist Conference to investigate the business. Their declining to do so, and consequently justice not being obtained, was the cause, which led to that trial at which the learned judge now presided.

(B) This refers to the two real anonymous letters, and to the two first letters of Mr. Hill to Mr. Sissison, with his name affixed to them, which by his desire, was cut off, when received.

would induce him to keep his hand-writing from being known, and cause him to disguise its real character by assuming a disguised hand. The two anonymous letters were written small, yet he did not think much could be drawn from that circumstance, for the reason he had before adduced, that since the writer of them did not think proper to give his name, in order to conceal it, he would vary his writing as much as possible from his usual style. Some of the letters, in the anonymous, appeared to have some command of pen. Was that a quality of the defendant's hand writing? This would be judged of by an examination of the letters acknowledged to be written by him. He confessed, it appeared to him, that there was a command of pen, in many of the defendant's letters, and further said, that although the letters had not been long before him, he discovered a great similarity in the formation of some of the letters, and directed the attention of the jury to the capital letters, and to the words, *Dear Sir* in the anonymous letters, and in the letters acknowledged to be written by the defendant, and from these the jury would judge. There were seven witnesses to prove the hand writing of the anonymous letters to be the defendant's, and there did not appear to be any thing materially different in their opinion of the writing*. Now, if the jury were of opinion that the defendant did not write the anonymous letters, and that he only wrote the other letters, produced in the cause, on the solicitation of Mr. Sissison, then the plaintiff had no ground of action, and their verdict must be for the defendant; but if they were of opinion that he had written the two anonymous letters, then they not only had no privilege in themselves, but took away the privilege which would otherwise attach to the other letters. In that case their verdict must be for the plaintiff, with such damages as they thought that the defendant ought to pay, and the plaintiff to receive, for the wanton injury which had been inflicted upon her.

The Jury, after retiring from their box for a quarter of an hour, returned a verdict for the plaintiff—

DAMAGES, £300.

The trial, which excited great interest, lasted from nine o'clock in the morning till six at night.

* Seven witnesses had sworn to the anonymous letters being in the hand-writing of Mr. Hill, but there were five more in court ready to have sworn, if necessary.

It was not expected by Miss B. or her friends, that after this matter had regularly issued in a Court of Law, the Methodist Conference would have rejudged the question, and have given a directly opposite verdict, especially as they had, on a former occasion stated that "a Court of Judicature was the most proper place in which to produce evidence;" but this they have done, and in so extraordinary a manner, that it is judged right not to conclude without making some observations on the Minutes published by the Methodist Conference in 1825.

These Minutes, as far as regards Mr. Hill's conduct, are as follows:

"Certain legal proceedings at the Assizes, recently held in York, in the case of Thomas Hill, (charged with writing various letters, alleged to be libellous,) having been made known to the Conference, the following Resolutions were adopted:—

I. With respect to the *anonymous* letters:—

Considering, First, That it appears to be the decided opinion of many respectable persons, who have inspected the said letters, that they are *not* in the hand-writing of Mr. Hill; and that a considerable number of those persons were prepared to have stated that opinion upon oath, as witnesses for the defendant, if Mr. Hill's counsel had not judged it more expedient, on the whole, for *professional* reasons, to refrain from calling them before the jury:—

Considering, Secondly, That Mr. Hill most solemnly protests, as he has uniformly protested, that the anonymous letters were neither written by himself, nor with his knowledge or connivance: which protestation does not appear, from the information now before the Conference, to have been *disproved* by any evidence hitherto adduced:—

It is, for these reasons, resolved, That the Conference do not feel themselves called, at present, to subject Mr. Hill to any act of

ecclesiastical discipline, on account of the *anonymous* letters referred to in the proceedings at York.

II. With respect to the letters *acknowledged* by Mr. Hill, as his own; the Conference resolve as follows:—

1. That, however justified Mr. Hill might have been, in consequence of the pressing application made to him for his frank opinion on the case, in giving that opinion to the person who confidentially requested it, *had it been conveyed in a proper manner, and in terms of suitable caution and moderation*—there are, in the letters which have recently appeared, a vehemence of spirit, and an intemperance of expression, highly unbecoming the character of a Christian Minister, and deserving of the severe censure of this body.

2. That Mr. Hill shall therefore receive a severe reproof from the President, in the presence of the Conference; and that he shall also be declared ineligible to fill the office of a Superintendent, in any of our circuits, for the four years next ensuing."

Upon this extraordinary article a few remarks are naturally called for.

1. With respect to the *anonymous* letters, the Conference find two reasons for exculpating Mr. Hill, though a *special* and *most intelligent* Jury of his country find him guilty! The first is,

"That it appears to be the decided opinion of many respectable persons, who have inspected the said letters, that they are *not* in the hand-writing of Mr. Hill; and that a considerable number of those persons were prepared to have stated that opinion upon oath, as witnesses for the defendant, if Mr. Hill's counsel had not judged it more expedient, on the whole, for *professional* reasons, to refrain from calling them before the jury."

Here we may stop before we proceed to the second reason. But we must ask where is the proof of all this? That many respectable persons had inspected the letters, is a fact, but they were

decidedly of opinion *that they were* in the hand-writing of Mr. Hill, and as to those persons whom Mr. H. had subpoenaed as witnesses, who were as follows: Messrs. Moss, Beal, Owen, Rodham, Smith, Sumner, Plummer, and Hurd, their can be little doubt what their evidence must have been, had they been called on in court, from what they had stated as their opinion before the trial.

1. Mr. Moss, the Methodist Preacher, the friend and colleague of Mr. Hill, might have given the evidence the Conference supposes, but he had seen *only one* of the letters.

2. Mr. Richard Beal saw *only one*, and he said to Mr. Little, at Mr. Owen's house, at Shields, and in his (Mr. Owen's) presence, on Mr. Little pointing out various similarities between the writing of the anonymous letter, and those of Mr. Hill. "I've seen enough, I've seen too much."

3. Mr. Owen had only seen *one*, but he told Dr. Oxley that he discovered a similarity in several of the letters to Mr. Hill's hand-writing. He also said, that had he been examined at the first trial, he should have done Mr. Hill's cause harm.

4. Mr. Thomas Rodham only saw *one* letter (though Mr. Hill falsely asserts in his publication on the subject, after the trial, which will shortly be noticed, that he saw them both) and Mr. Rodham acknowledged that he discovered a similarity in some of the letters, and though he could not but believe Mr. Hill, as he denied writing it; he would not swear he did not write it.

5. Mr. Plummer saw *both* the letters, and said to Mr. Rispin, of Aldbro', in Holderness, that he was of opinion that Mr. Hill was not the writer of them, *because the writing was so much like his*, that had it been his he would have disguised it more. He also stated the same in Mr. Sumner's house, at Hanley, in Staffordshire. He further said to Mr. Rispin, that if Mr. Hill did not write them, he certainly indited them. Miss Bell heard Mr. Sumner, the Methodist Preacher, after he had compared the anonymous letters

with Mr. Hill's, say to Mr. Plummer, laying his hand on the letters, "Would you, Mr. Plummer, swear that Mr. Hill did not write these letters, to which Mr. Plummer replied no I would not."

6. Mr. Hurd said in Mr. Sumner's house, he was not a sufficient judge of writing, and could not give an opinion.

These were all Mr. Hill's witnesses, who had seen one or both of the letters.

As to "a considerable number of those persons who were prepared to have stated that opinion" (that they were not in Mr. Hill's hand writing) "as witnesses for the defendant, if Mr. Hill's counsel, had not judged it more expedient, on the whole, for professional reasons, to refrain from calling them before a jury." Mr. Hill, in his publication, says, that "*the reason assigned for not calling his witnesses, was to avoid the concluding speech of the opposite counsel,*" and that it would have injured his cause had they been called and subjected to the cross examination of Mr. Brougham, there cannot be a doubt. Indeed Mr. Hill's counsel were so convinced of it that they all threatened to throw up their briefs, had Mr. Hill's attorney insisted on their being examined in court*. These were the professional reasons why Mr. Hill's counsel very prudently refrained from calling the witnesses before the jury.

The Conference, in their search after truth, might have obtained important information from those gentlemen in Hull, who, it was well known, had carefully examined the affair, and had procured the attendance of Mr. Hill, in Hull, who, though he refused to meet Miss Bell, or any of her friends, from Shields, at last consented to meet those gentlemen; and let us now look at the result. The gentlemen referred to, are, Thomas Thompson, esq.

* Vide Mr. Hill's pamphlet, page 29.

Mr. Cookman, Mr. James Henwood, Mr. Robert Garbutt, and Mr. George Locking, who, after a careful comparison of Mr. Hill's letters, with the anonymous, were, with the exception of Mr. Locking, unanimously of opinion that the anonymous letters were written by Mr. Hill; and even Mr. Locking said, that though he would not positively say they were Mr. Hill's writing, as he (Mr. Hill) was a Minister of the Gospel, and solemnly denied it, yet, he agreed with the other gentlemen, that there was a most striking similarity between the anonymous letters and the others.

And let the reader keep in mind, that a number of very competent witnesses, at the trial, swore to the anonymous letters being in Mr. Hill's own hand writing, and also that several others were waiting to do so.—The remarks of Judge Bayley on the same subject, are surely worthy of some regard at least, (see page 132), The same may be observed respecting the remarkable similarity between those letters and the letters acknowledged by Mr. Hill to be his own, as pointed out in the remarks accompanying the Fac-Similies.

With regard to the *second* reason which the Conference gives for not believing the anonymous letters to be Mr. Hill's, it is, if possible, weaker than the first.

"That Mr. Hill most solemnly protests, as he has uniformly protested, that the anonymous letters were neither written by himself, nor with his knowledge or connivance; which protestation does not appear, from the information now before the Conference, to have been *disproved* by any evidence hitherto adduced."

It was known to *several*, perhaps to *many* preachers in the Conference that Mr. Hill had already *been proved guilty* in this business of *falsifying the most solemn protestations*; how, therefore, can they be justifiable in acquiescing in this second resolution:—
 "That Mr. Hill most solemnly protests, as he has uniformly protested, that the anonymous letters were neither written by himself, nor with his knowledge or connivance: which protestation does not

appear, from the information now before the Conference, to have been *disproved* by any evidence hitherto adduced—

They had evidence of his solemnly denying one crime, which was afterwards *proved* against him ; how then, can they consistently with any proper sense of truth and justice, profess to receive his testimony as evidence that he was not guilty of *another crime of the very same nature*, merely because he protests that he is innocent ? and that several of the preachers were in possession of this information, is clear ; inasmuch as a pamphlet was published and sent to the Sheffield Conference, in 1823, in which it was stated that in the presence of many witnesses in Shields both in public and private ; Mr. Hill had most solemnly protested he had not written any ill of Miss Bell in any letters to Hull, and that he knew nothing against her, also that he had received a letter from the anonymous writer ; a certificate was also afterwards signed by various Leaders, and others, and sent to Thomas Thompson, esq. and the other gentlemen named, stating the same ; and these preachers had, before the Conference, whose minutes we are considering, (the Bristol one, in 1825) seen several letters in the public papers, as read on the trial, with Mr. Hill's name to them, and which letters he acknowledged to be his, and now acknowledges, in which almost every ill was said of Miss Bell and her family, and which letters, let it be remembered, were written and sent to Hull, before he made the declaration in question, and which they must have known to have been the case from the date of the letters.

The number of preachers, in possession of this information, cannot be supposed very small, if we consider that the character of the whole conference was deeply involved in this affair, which would naturally excite the preachers to obtain every information likely to save its reputation ; and these facts being fairly before the public, may be presumed to have been known to many individual preachers in a body of between seven and eight hundred, and, no doubt, they were known to the leading preachers. What then can be thought of this extraordinary attempt to exculpate Mr. Hill ? The reader may be perhaps assisted in coming to a right opinion on this subject, by being

informed, that in the year 1822, when a friend of Miss Bell applied to Conference to investigate the case, the President, (Dr. Clarke) returned for answer, that the Conference had too much respect for a British Court of Justice, to re-hear a cause that had regularly issued there; but when the cause was again brought into court at York, (though Mr. Hill was there found guilty before Judge Bayley, by a special jury) the Conference not only re-hear the case, but attempt to exculpate Mr. Hill, Dr. Clarke, being himself in Conference on both occasions.

Had the Conference been anxious to know the real state of the case, they could, and doubtless would, have availed themselves of the offer made by Mr. Sisson to give up the letters for their inspection before the last trial; indeed he put them into the possession of Mr. Kelk, the superintendant preacher of the Hull Circuit, for the purpose, and sent a certificate to the President of the Leeds Conference in 1824, stating his readiness to come forward, if they requested, to give evidence against Mr. Hill. All the Hull preachers at least knew that these letters had been examined before Mr. Thompson and the other gentlemen in Hull, and that they had compared them with the anonymous letters, and believed them all written to be by Mr. Hill, as before stated.

The Conference next adverts to the letters acknowledged by Mr. Hill, as his own.

II. With respect to the letters acknowledged by Mr. Hill, as his own, the Conference resolves as follows:—

1. "That, however justified Mr. Hill might have been, in consequence of the pressing application made to him for his frank opinion on the case, in giving that opinion to the person who confidentially requested it, *had it been conveyed in a proper manner, and in terms of suitable caution and moderation*—there are, in the letters which have recently appeared, a vehemence of spirit, and an intemperance of expression, highly unbecoming the character of a Christian Minister, and deserving of the severe censure of this body.

2. That Mr. Hill shall therefore receive a severe reproof from the President, in the presence of the Conference; and that he shall also be declared ineligible to fill the office of a Superintendent, in any of our circuits, for the four years next ensuing."

The Conference might have known that no application whatever was made by Mr. Sission till after the anonymous letters were sent him, and then that none was made to Mr. Hill at all in the first instance, but to Mrs. Hill. It is very observable, that the Conference does not censure Mr. Hill for having brought all this misery upon Miss B. and her family, by writing the most infamous falsehoods of her and them, while all the time he was denying all knowledge of any one's endeavouring to destroy her character, and declaring he knew nothing against her, and had written "so ill of her in letters to Hull;" but the censure merely extends to this, that the information was not conveyed "in a proper manner, and in terms of suitable caution and moderation," and that in the letters there "appeared a vehemence of spirit and an intemperance highly unbecoming." Let any one read over Mr. Hill's twenty infamous letters, containing the foulest charges and insinuations against an innocent and orphan female, and say whether such an attempt dexterously to remove the charge from that of uttering the greatest falsities and most bare-faced slander, to the venial offence of a hasty intemperate manner of writing, is not to use the language of the writer of the minute "highly unbecoming the character of those who call themselves christian ministers," and deserving the severe censure of the "whole Methodist Body."

One is led to say, as Cowper does, with reference to the Slave Trade—"There is no flesh in man's obdurate heart." Must it be obliged to be understood by this case, that if it happens there could be found another Methodist Preacher capable of acting the cruel part Mr. Hill has done, viz. to ruin the character and blast the prospects of any female whose friends may oppose his measures, providing that he attend to the manner in which it is done, that he need not be much alarmed if he should even be detected, and it should be found that he had written the greatest falsehoods of her, and uttered

the most shameful slanders, and even accompanied all this with the most violent language, as the Conference will still consider him eligible to teach others the way to heaven, and only refuse him the honour of being the superintendant preacher for four years, the principal profit of which arises from the books he sells in his circuit. Did not Mr. Hill publish a pamphlet last year before the Conference, with his name affixed? Did not that pamphlet, amongst other falsehoods, contain the following statement at page 7? "*It was now ascertained that Sissison had, contrary to the opinion which I gave him in my letters, and contrary to every thing which I conceive to be honourable and just, broken off his engagements with Miss Bell.*" Was not that pamphlet widely circulated amongst the preachers? Did not they, previous to that, read many letters in the public papers, as produced on the trial, with Mr. Hill's signature to them? Need it be asked, did not those letters contain "*advice and opinion*" to Mr. Sissison, directly contrary to what Mr. H. states to be the opinion which he had given.

Can any thing contain a more direct proof of falsehood than this? and yet he is continued a preacher. It is true he was reproved last Conference for acting unconstitutionally and *unadvisedly* in publishing that pamphlet. A supplement also appeared which was anonymous, in which Mr. Moss and another friend of the Conference, who had opposed him in some measures, were attacked in such a way as to be considered libellous. When first questioned, he denied the supplement, but afterwards confessed he had seen the Manuscript, and had agreed to its being printed.—The pamphlet was ordered into Conference to be destroyed, and an injunction laid upon him not to write another line on the subject, on pain of being expelled the Methodist Connection. The whole affair cannot but be considered a most cruel and glaring case, and certainly the Conference ought to see it so. To remunerate Miss Bell, is not in their power, to say nothing of the great loss in pecuniary matters which she has sustained, the unhappy effects upon her near relatives, and her continued suffering from ill health, and depression of mind, are incalculable. If the Conference will do nothing but endeavour to extenuate Mr. Hill's crime, the intelligent part of the Methodist public, who

are acquainted with it cannot but say of their Israel, as of Israel of old, in her worst and declining times, "*justice has fallen in our streets.*" What security can the father and mother of any Methodist Families have, that, if they oppose any of the Preachers, they shall not be made to mourn over the unavailing sorrow of a beloved daughter, whose peace of mind is destroyed by the wickedness of one of their brethren.

It has been before noticed, that Mr. Hill, after the trial at York, issued a pamphlet, in which he denies having written the anonymous letters*. This pamphlet contains so many falsehoods and mis-statements, that, although the present work has been already extended much beyond what was originally intended, it appears essential, for the cause of truth, that some notice should be taken of them. Previously to the publication of the pamphlet, Mr. Hill issued a circular, the chief object of which was to obtain pecuniary assistance; this was signed by three persons, members of the Methodist Society, at Northwich, where Mr. Hill was stationed, who, from their local situation, were probably, entirely ignorant of the facts to which they subscribed, but, were induced by relying on Mr. Hill's word, to put their names to a tissue of falsehoods, some of which will also be noticed. And, first, it is of great importance to observe the artful stratagem to which Mr. H. has recourse in attributing the measures which have been adopted against himself, to an union of the enemies of Methodism, who merely employed the plaintiff as an instrument to effect his ruin, and thereby to degrade the body to which he belongs; and that their operations originated in hostility

* It is of considerable importance to observe, that though Mr. Hill denies being the author of the anonymous letters, he makes no attempt to prove the truth of those statements made in his acknowledged letters, and which in substance differ but little from the anonymous letters.

to Methodism. This designing insinuation is evidently intended to identify his cause with the cause of Methodism, and by representing himself as the object of party hostility, to unite on his behalf those who are interested in defending and upholding this cause. This effect it most certainly has had, as may be seen by the conduct of Conference already noticed, and also by the language of the circular alluded to. Its effect may also be known by the very general and large subscriptions which were given to him by members of that body, who evidently considered him as a martyr to Methodism. That this insinuation is absolutely false, and merely fabricated for the purposes named, may be clearly discerned by all who will impartially examine the foregoing pages. It is evident that Miss Bell was very anxious, and used every means in her power to have the matter brought before Methodists, and settled according to the usages of Methodism, but was unable to accomplish it, and it was not until she had repeatedly, but fruitlessly, endeavoured to obtain a District Meeting that she had recourse to law. Mr. Hill himself allows in page 19 of his pamphlet, that she wished to obtain a District Meeting, although he perverts the object of it. He states that he had to contend with a rich and powerful party, and in order to make it appear that Miss Bell was supported by this party, he had recourse to another subterfuge: he says that Mr. John Bell swore, on the first trial, that his father left only £80. and he wishes by this to have it understood that Miss B. could have no means, from her own resources, to defray the expenses which the prosecution would entail upon her. Mr. Hill must have known that when Mr. John Bell swore to his father having only left £80. that sum was the cash left, and he says nothing of the valuable stock, which was all paid for, and the book debts. The fact is, that Miss Bell has had no connexion with any party; that what she has done has been done from a desire to vindicate her own character which has been so grossly aspersed. That several friends, who were acquainted with the painful circumstances in which she was placed, sympathized with her, and gave her advice, she would by no means deny; but these were most of them, at the time they first espoused her cause, amongst the warmest friends to Methodism, and were only the enemies of injustice and calumny. The pecuniary

and which Miss B. has received since involved in this unpleasant affair, has been very small, not half sufficient to defray her *travelling expenses alone*, and, the fact, that she has had to bear the whole charges incurred by *two expensive law suits*, and has been enabled to support herself without being burdensome to her friends, will sufficiently prove the falsehood of this insinuation, and that her cause has not been the rallying point of a party.

For the reason already noticed, Mr. Hill wishes to have it understood that those individuals, who considered Miss Bell to have been greatly injured and espoused her cause, had made themselves obnoxious to the Methodist Society, and that consequently they would be desirous of revenging themselves by injuring the Society: thus he says, that "John Bell was excluded from the Society a long time before he knew him," and that "seven of his adversaries were removed from the Society for things which he should not mention." These assertions are absolutely false, Mr. John Bell never was at any time excluded the Society. He gave up his ticket and declined being any longer a Member, when he found that he could not obtain an investigation of this affair by the Society, but this was entirely a voluntary act. With respect to the other seven whom he names his adversaries, and by which term he means to designate those Leaders who were convinced of his guilt, and wished to obtain an investigation of the affair in the Society, they were as follows: Dr. Oxley, Mr. Little, Mr. Nevison, Mr. John Potter, Mr. Michael Cook, Mr. Thomas Smart, and Mr. Edward Matthews*. These were all Leaders, except Mr. Little, who had declined, but, by the particular desire of Mr. Hill, and the unanimous wish of the Leaders, he

* There can be little doubt he refers to these, as he always termed them his adversaries, and though there were many of them to whom he gave the same name; these were the most active, but none who came under this denomination were ever removed from the Society.

sat in the Leaders Meeting, and several of them were Local Preachers, which situation they held up to the time of Mr. Hill's being accused, and though some of them did subsequently leave the Society, disgusted at the want of justice displayed towards Miss Bell, not one of them, nor any other individual favourable to an investigation, was dismissed either from the situation he held, or from the Society.

It is impossible, without trespassing too long on the time and patience of the reader, to go through all the mis-statements contained in the circular and pamphlet; one or two of the most important only will be slightly noticed. Mr. Hill is desirous to make it appear that he had no cause of enmity against Mr. Bell at the time when the anonymous letters were written, and therefore solemnly declares in page 5 of the pamphlet, that he knew nothing of his having interfered in the concerns of the Blyth Chapel till July, or nearly a month after the anonymous letters were written. Now, the fact is, that it was in January, and not in July, when Mr. Bell first offended Mr. Hill; it was in a conversation which took place in Mr. Moss's house, and in his presence, respecting the difference between Mr. Hill and the Blyth Leaders as to the settlement of their chapel on Conference plan, when Mr. Bell offended Mr. Hill, by opposing his measures; and from that moment Mr. Hill regarded him as his enemy, and complained of him as such to various individuals, two of whom named the circumstances in their evidence on the trial at York, (see Dr. Oxley's and Mr. Potter's evidences, pages 75 and 81.)

He says again, that Miss Bell gave Mr. Sission a written discharge from all engagements; this is equally untrue; Miss Bell never did sign, and never intended to sign any such release, nor did Mr. Sission apply to her for that purpose; all that Miss Bell signed was an engagement that she would not go forward with the prosecution which her brother had thought proper to commence against him; their purpose being not to prosecute Mr. S. but to prove her own innocence, she therefore readily signed this engagement, when informed by her attorney and friends that this object would be best attained by an action against Mr. Hill.

Besides direct falsehoods, these publications contain many extremely unpleasant insinuations that are evidently intended to debase the character of Miss Bell. Thus he says, page 22, that "Miss Bell went into Staffordshire to exhibit her papers," and that he will not attempt to describe her conduct there, at Leeds, Bolton, &c. that she wrote two letters to booksellers in Staffordshire, the contents of which he does not wish to expose. These allusions, though not direct charges, are not, on that account, less slanderous, as they are intended to convince the reader that some gross improprieties did occur, the particulars of which are left to his own imagination to fill up, and from the manner in which they are mentioned, as being almost too bad to be expressed, they often lead the reader to put the worst construction upon them. But it is most evident, from the whole of Mr. Hill's conduct, and from the letters before published, that he is exceedingly anxious to place Miss B. in as degraded a point of view as possible. Why then this amazing tenderness, lest he should be the means of exposing her? The truth is, that there was nothing in Miss B.'s conduct in these particulars, with which he could find fault, and therefore he wisely refrains from specifying particulars. As to Miss B.'s going into Staffordshire, if Mr. Hill was not in the habit of forgetting what he had written, he would remember that in his letters to Mr. Sisson, he stated that she and her brother were "*buried in debt*," and that they were expected to "*call their creditors together*." Miss Bell's sole object therefore in visiting Staffordshire, was to obtain certificates from the manufacturers with whom they dealt, that they had always conducted their business in an honourable manner (see Appendix) By her papers he must mean the anonymous letters, as Miss Bell had no other papers with her except letters of his writing, to shew the similarity between them. Her visit to Leeds, alluded to, was to induce the Conference to investigate the affair, to prevent its going into court, to which business alone she attended. The letters named were sent to the booksellers with a pamphlet, which has been before mentioned, and contained nothing but a request that they would read them, and use their endeavours to sell them.

There is one point more which it seems particularly needful to notice, and which, it will be remembered, was alluded to by Mr. Hill's counsel, (see Mr. Pollock's speech, page 127,) namely, that some unfavourable account of Miss Bell had been sent by a Mr. Robert Harley. Mr. Hill, in his pamphlet, presumes to say that Mr. Harley, in a letter to Mr. Sission, dated May, 1821, (which was before the anonymous letters were written) containing an invoice of goods, sent also an account of Miss B. which "corresponded with all that he himself afterwards wrote on the subject,"—and that Mr. Harley got his information from a gentleman and two respectable women*. It is deserving of particular attention, that previous to the last trial, Mr. Sission gave up *all* the letters which he had received from Mr. Harley†, which were all on business, and in *none* of them, save two, was Miss Bell named, or alluded to; one of these was the letter Mr. Hill mentions, containing an invoice of goods, dated May, 1821, in which occurs the following sentence: "I called and delivered your letter, but did not see Miss Bell, as she was rather poorly," and the other dated in August, 1821, which was after Mr. Sission had received the anonymous letters, and several with Mr. Hill's signature, in allusion to which, Mr. Harley says, "I am extremely sorry you are so painfully exercised about your business in the north; the circumstance is peculiarly

* Mr. Moss, Mrs. Ramsey, and her sister, are the individuals to whom Mr. Hill alludes, for he named them as such in a letter to Mr. Sission, the former of whom declared to the Rev. Mr. Naylor, and the latter to Dr. Oxley, that though Miss Bell was named between them and Mr. Harley, not one unfavourable word was said of her, for they knew nothing against her, but that what was said, was in her favour.

† It may be necessary to observe, that when Mr. Sission gave up Mr. Hill's, and other letters, he did not give them for the purpose of publication, but, as it is necessary, for the cause of truth, that they should be published, the opportunity has been taken.

trying, and I really feel for you." These two sentences are all Mr. Harley wrote respecting Miss Bell in his letters to Mr. Sissison, although Mr. Hill declares that the contents of one of them "corresponded with all that he himself afterwards wrote on the subject." It may be remarked, that Mr. Sissison's opinion of Miss Bell remained unchanged, until he received the anonymous letters, for he solemnly declared to Henry John Shepherd, esq. Miss Bell's solicitor, in the presence of Dr. Oxley and Mr. Cookman, that he had the most affectionate feeling towards Miss B. up to that period; as also appeared from his own letters; quotations from which have already been given.

It is quite unnecessary to notice more of the various falsehoods contained in this work; sufficient has been brought forward to shew its general character, and what dependence is to be placed on it. Let any one, who is desirous of knowing the truth, compare the following passage with Mr. Hill's letters, and then decide what reliance is to be placed on his word. This passage has already been noticed, but it is one which so clearly and palpably delineates his character, that too much attention cannot be paid to it. The passage is as follows: "*It was now ascertained that Sissison had, contrary to the opinion which I gave him in my letters, and contrary to every thing which I conceive to be honourable and just, broken off his engagements with Miss Bell.*"

The case being now before the public, although it is with great reluctance that it is thus brought forward, yet, on a review of the whole, it is thought that the reasons given in the Preface will be found sufficiently weighty to have demanded such an appeal. All that is asked, is a candid and impartial examination, and it is believed that the result will be a conviction that the injured individual, whose sufferings have been but faintly recorded, has been the innocent victim of one of the most cruel and unprovoked persecutions that has ever disgraced the name of a christian minister.

APPENDIX.

We, the undersigned, all the Local Preachers, all the Stewards, all the Leaders, and various Members of the Methodist Connexion, and other respectable inhabitants of North and South-Shields, and the vicinity, do certify, that many of us have known Miss Jane Bell, late of South-Shields, now of North-Shields, from her infancy, and all of us for several years; that her religious and moral character has ever been unimpeached and unsullied by the breath of reproach.

NORTH-SHIELDS.

W. Little, circuit steward	Thomas Smart, leader
W. Oxley, M. D. local preacher and leader	William Laws, Do.
W. Nevison, Do. Do.	Thomas Mitchell, Do.
John Potter, Do. Do.	Michael Cook, Do.
Robert Cook, Do. Do.	E. Galloway, trustee
Richard Beal, Do. Do.	W. Marton, member,
W. Wingrave, Do. Do.	Duncan M'Allan, surgeon, member, Wallsend
John Young, Do. Do.	W. Bramwell, surgeon, member
John Owen, local preacher, circuit steward and leader	John Tinley, (esq.)
Matthew Richardson, local preacher	A. Trotter, surgeon
W. Bogie, Do.	F. Watson, Do.
W. Wears, Do.	Robert Irons, Do.
W. Summerside, Do.	Henry Parker, artist
Richard Taylor, Do.	Charles Charleton, vicar
Peter Matthews, leader	John Cochran, minister
Joseph Steward, Do.	George Wall, Do.
Jackson Smith, Do.	Thomas Gilmore, Do.
W. Summerside, Do.	James Williamson, Do.
Thomas Moody, Do.	W. Linskill, (esq.)
Thomas Hudson, Do.	James Burn, (esq.)
	Thos. Kettlewell, ship-owner

SOUTH-SHIELDS.

Christopher Wawn, Circuit
steward and leader

Eliza Robson, relict of John
Robson, steward and leader
John Dugate, local preacher
and leader

John Reay, local preacher and
leader

Benjamin Melvell, leader

Robert Harkis, Do.

George Stokoe, Do.

Thomas Vint, Do.

John Foster, Do.

Henry Sprague, Do.

Matthew Golightly, Do.

John Scott, Do.

Joseph Graham, Do.

John Blumer, Do.

William Smith, Do.

John Brown, Do.

Edward Robson, member

William Reay, Do.

T. Matterson, member

Henry Hall, Do.

John Allan, Do.

John Hedley, surgeon

John Mason, Do.

Cuthbert Heron, (bart.)

Christopher Bainbridge, (esq.)

Henry Wright, (esq.)

James Laing, (esq.)

Thomas Skipsey, ship-owner

George Brown, Do.

Jeremiah Archer, Do.

George Kell, Do.

Thomas Harrison, Do.

William Brown, Do.

Edward Harper, Do.

Matthew Robson, Do.

James Kirkley, merchant

James Young, ship-owner

Thomas Stephenson, merchant

Thomas Reay, Do.

One leader, Robert Laws, was from home when the certificate was signed; but he stated, at Mr. Bell's, that he should sign it.

We, the undersigned, respectively residing and carrying on business at North-Shields, do hereby certify that the late Mr. John Bell, and his sister, Miss Jane Bell, dealt with us for some years,

and always regularly and punctually paid our accounts, and that the character of Miss Bell has always been unexceptionable.

THOMAS HALL, Upholsterer.
 GEORGE WALKER, for BARNES and Co. Stationers.
 JAMES RICHARDSON, Grocer.
 T. and W. RICHARDSON, Grocers.
 JAMES GIBSON, Butcher.
 W. AYNLEY, Butcher.
 JOHN THWAITES, Painter.
 THOMAS APPERBY, Bookseller.
 WILLIAM POTTS, Draper.
 JOHN SWAN, Butcher.
 THOMAS RIPPON, Tailor.
 ELISHA DIXON, Shoe-Maker.
 THOMAS MATHWIN, Ironmonger.
 JOSEPH REAY, Grocer.
 ROBERT ELSDON, Chemist.
 THOMAS HEWORTH, Draper.
 W. DOBINSON, Grocer, &c. &c.
 J. CLARK, Draper.
 N. BIRD, Earthenware Manufacturer.
 BURRELL and Co Flint Glass Manufacturers.
 JOSEPH PRICE, Glass Manufacturer, Newcastle,

North-Shields, July, 1825.

This is to certify, that I have known Miss Jane Bell, her father, and family; for upwards of twenty years they have purchased goods of me in the Linen and Woollen Drapery line, and always paid and conducted themselves in the most honourable and upright manner, and have, in every respect, borne most excellent characters.

As witness my hand this 6th day of July, 1825.

South-Shields.

JAMES KIRKLEY.

P. S. Miss J. Bell resided next door to me, and I can speak positively to her general conduct being unimpeachable.

J. K.

This is to certify, that Miss Jane Bell, and her family, have dealt with me, and honourably discharged whatever I had against them, and I further state that they lived in the respect and esteem of my family, and the character of Miss Jane Bell was unimpeached.

JOHN ALLEN, Druggist.

South-Shields, July 7, 1825.

I do hereby certify, that the late Mr. John Bell and Miss Jane Bell, were my tenants, at North-Shields, for several years, and that they always regularly paid a rent of forty pounds per annum, and that I have always considered their characters unexceptionable, and Miss Jane Bell as a prudent, virtuous, and respectable person.

ROBERT IRONS, Surgeon.

South-Shields, July 5, 1825.

This is to certify, that Miss Jane Bell, and her family, have dealt with me for several years, and always discharged the accounts I had against them in the most honourable manner, and I also certify, that from my knowledge of them, they were highly respected, and Miss Bell esteemed as a virtuous and prudent young woman.

THOMAS REAY, Grocer.

South-Shields, July 6, 1825.

This is to certify, that Miss Jane Bell, and her family, have dealt with me, and honourably discharged whatever I had against them, and I further state that they lived in the respect and esteem of my family, and the character of Miss Jane Bell was unimpeached.

H. HALL, Ironthonger.

South-Shields, July 7, 1825.

This is to certify that I have known Miss Jane Bell, and her family, for several years, they have dealt with me, and at all times have paid very punctually and honourably, and were considered highly respectable characters.

WILLIAM RICHARDSON, Linen Draper.

South-Shields, July 6, 1825.

This is to certify, that I have known Miss Jane Bell, and her family, for several years past, and never knew anything prejudicial to her character or any of the family, and always considered Miss Bell a discreet woman

Witness my hand,

JOHN HEDLEY, Surgeon.

South-Shields, July 19, 1825.

The following certificates from the whole of the manufacturers with whom Miss B. and her brother dealt, were obtained in consequence of the assertion in Mr. Hill's letter to Mr. Sisison, dated June, 1821, in which he states that they were "buried in debt;" and, in a subsequent letter, dated August, 1821, he says, they were "expected to call their creditors together."

Lane-End, Staffordshire.

This is to certify, that the late Mr. John Bell, and his sister Miss Jane Bell, in the firm of John Bell and Co. of North-Shields, dealt with us for China, &c. which goods they honourably paid us for, and, in June, 1821, they did not owe us any thing.

Witness our hands, this 10th day of February, 1825.

BAILLY and BATHIN.

Lane-Delph, Staffordshire.

This is to certify, that the late Mr. John Bell, and his sister Miss Jane Bell, in the firm of John Bell and Co of North-Shields, dealt with us for China, &c. which goods they honourably paid us for, and, in June, 1821, they did not owe us any thing.

Witness our hands, this 11th day of February, 1825.

J. and C. MASON.

Stoke, Staffordshire, February 12, 1825.

I certify, that the late Mr. John Bell, and his sister, Miss Jane Bell, of North-Shields, honourably paid me for all the goods they had from me, and, in June, 1821, they did not owe me any thing.

ROBERT HAMILTON.

Longport, Staffordshire, February 13, 1825.

This is to certify, that the late Mr John Bell, and his sister, Miss Jane Bell, of North-Shields, in the firm of John Bell and Co. dealt with us for Earthenware, which goods they honourably paid us for, and, in June, 1821, they did not owe us any thing.

FOR HENSHALL and WILLIAMSON,

H. HOLLINS.

Burslem, Staffordshire, February 16, 1825.

This is to certify, that the late Mr. John Bell, and his sister, Miss Jane Bell, in the firm of John Bell and Co. of North-Shields, dealt with us for China, &c. for which goods they honourably paid us. In June, 1821, there was an account open between us, which account, when due, was honourably settled.

FOR MACHIN and Co.

C. BAINES.

Etruria, Staffordshire, February 16, 1825.

This is to certify, that the firm of John Bell and Co. of North Shields, dealt with me, and duly paid for the goods they had from me, and that in June, 1821, the firm owed me nothing.

For JOSIAH WEDGWOOD,

J. WEDGWOOD, jun.

Caulden-Place, Staffordshire, February 17, 1825.

This is to certify, that the late Mr. John Bell, and his sister, Miss Jane Bell, in the firm of John Bell and Co. of North-Shields, dealt with us for China, &c. for which goods they honourably paid us. In June, 1821, there was an account open between us, which account, when due, was duly settled.

JOHN and WILLIAM RIDGWAY.

Burslem, February 18, 1825.

This is to certify, that Mr. John Bell, and his sister, Miss Jane Bell, in the firm of Bell and Co. of North-Shields, dealt with me for goods, for which they honourably paid; at the time of the death of Miss Bell's brother, there was an account open, and Miss B. paid the balance.

JOHN CORRIE.

THE END.

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John Hutchinson, Printer, Silver-Street, Hull.

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